A

SHORT VIEW

OF THE

CONDUCT

OF THE

Englisſh Clergy.

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A SHORT VIEW OF THE CONDUCT OF THE *ENGLISH CLERGY*,

So far as relates to

CIVIL AFFAIRS,

FROM THE

CONQUEST to the REVOLUTION.

But tract of time, and long proſperity
(That nurſe of vice, this of inſolency)
Lulled the ſhepperds in ſuch ſecurity,
That, not content with loyal obeyſance,
Some 'gan to gape at greedy governance,
And match themſelves with mighty potentates,
Lovers of lordſhips, and troublers of ſtates.

SPENCER.

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MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

A ſhort View of the Conduct of the CLERGY.

THE behaviour of the clergy having ſeem'd to be very extraordinary on ſome late occaſions, I was led by my reflections on that head to make ſome further enquiry, than I had hitherto done, what the conduct of that ſet of men had been from the more early times of our government down to the preſent, and what had been the opinions of the wiſeſt of our anceſtors about it.

I thought it was far from improper at this time to know not only what reſtrictions to the power and wealth of the church, the legiſlature had formerly deem'd requiſite, but alſo whether the clergy had not by their behaviour made thoſe reſtrictions abſolutely neceſſary. From thence we may better know what to think of their clamours of late, upon any attempt to put the leaſt limits to their property, or reſtrictions to their power, in ſuch caſes,

where it might be made uſe of to oppreſs any of their fellow-ſubjects.

For tho' the reaſonableneſs of laws to prevent the abuſe of power, or an exorbitant increaſe of property in any ſet of men, where there is only a probability of either, is itſelf ſufficient to recommend the enacting them, even tho' we had not already been ſenſible of ſuch abuſes; yet the neceſſity of ſuch laws is ſtill further enforced, when founded on examples and experience, and confirmed by the opinions of our wiſe predeceſſors.

It is for this reaſon, I trouble the publick with the following ſheets, that by laying before them in as ſhort and compendious a manner, as I am able, an hiſtorical account of the conduct of the clergy of this nation, as far as it any way affected civil affairs ſince the time of William I, they may form a judgment from matters of fact, how far neceſſary all precautions in the laity againſt the deſigns of the clergy are, according as they ſee this conduct of theirs has promoted the publick good or otherwiſe.

Whoever looks into our antient hiſtories, will find the clergy have been always guided by a diſtinct intereſt of their own, moſt frequently contrary to that of the nation: inſtead of aſſerting the liberty of the people, they have

have been moſt inſtrumental in all attempts to deſtroy it; inſtead of propagating generous notions of freedom, they have conſtantly endeavour'd to inſtil into the minds of men the moſt ſlaviſh maxims, and taught leſſons of the moſt blind and abject ſubmiſſion.

Their oppoſition to power, whenever they have made any, has generally been factious and ſelfiſh, not grounded on motives of regard for the good of the common-wealth, but occaſion'd by ſome attempt upon their temporal intereſt or privileges, which was often no other than a juſt intention of retrenching their encroachments upon the crown, and people.

Accordingly we may obſerve, that the moſt dangerous deſigns againſt the publick have been form'd by ſuch of our princes, who begun with ſecuring the clergy to their intereſt by great condeſcenſions to them; for we ſeldom find the clergy to have fail'd returning the compliment by a concurrence in promoting the moſt arbitrary attempts by their doctrine and actions.

The uſe, the clergy have made, of what power they have acquired under ſuch princes, has always been moſt inſupportable to the laity, eſpecially to ſuch as have oppoſed it.

I will not detain the reader any longer from forming his own judgment on this ſubject, but haſten to my relation of facts, by which only I deſire he may be determin'd, as he ſhall find them agreeable to truth, to which I have endeavour'd to have the ſtricteſt regard.

The battle of Haſtings gain'd by the duke of Normandy would have been very far from determining the fate of this country, had the Engliſh ſufficiently united in its defence. He was in poſſeſſion of but one caſtle in the kingdom, that of Dover. The earls Morcar and Edwin, who had diſtinguiſh'd themſelves already in the defence of their country, had ſhut themſelves up in London with the remains of the army defeated at Haſtings. William could not without evident danger march into the heart of the kingdom, and leave that city behind him in poſſeſſion of his enemies; nor could he lay ſiege to a place, that would coſt him much time, and employ the greateſt part of his army, which was no large one, without leaving all the remote countries in England at liberty to take proper meaſures for their ſecurity, and to raiſe ſeveral armies, which might have been greatly ſuperiour to his own.

Whilſt

Whilſt he was in this perplex'd ſituation, the Engliſh had no reaſon to deſpair; and indeed the two earls juſt mention'd uſed all their efforts to animate the Londoners.

To unite them the more it was propos'd to declare young Edgar king. In this generous deſign it was reaſonable to think, the clergy would have unanimouſly concurr'd. One would expect to find that body of men making uſe of all their influence over the people to inſpire them with a ſenſe of the duty, they ow'd their country, and the obligations they were under to venture their lives in defending it from an army of rapacious adventurers: that they would have employ'd their interceſſion with heaven (which they would willingly have thought to be ſo efficacious) to avert the impending ſlavery, and by it have promoted a confident zeal in their countrymen to exert themſelves with intrepidity in ſo glorious a cauſe.

But how little was the publick good any motive of their conduct! they could not think of continuing a war, which expos'd the lands of the church to rapine and deſolation, when, by a timely ſacrifice of the liberty of their fellow-ſubjects, they had it in their power to make their own terms: they could not help being partial in favour of one, who had under-

taken

taken his enterprize with the countenance of the Pope: and they thought the church might make an acquiſition of wealth and power under a prince, that had the character of being religious, and who could not but think himſelf under the greateſt obligations to them, ſhould the people by their means be prevail'd on to receive him for their king.

With theſe views they oppos'd the deſigns of the people, who had now come to a reſolution of placing young * Edgar on the throne; but by the biſhops declaring for William, the citizens were by their example at laſt prevail'd on to open their gates, and receive him.

Thus by the intereſted cabals of the clergy were the Engliſh diſſuaded from uniting in defence of their country; and the deſirable ſtate of liberty, founded on and ſecur'd by prudent and wholeſome laws, which they had enjoy'd under the race of Saxon kings, was chang'd for the oppreſſive government of a Norman invader.

Nor was it long before the clergy themſelves found, how ill-grounded their ſelfiſh policy had been, notwithſtanding the monaſteries had a ſhare in the diſtribution of king Harold's treaſure; but what oppoſition any of them made to the invaſion of their own rights, when

* *Cæteri proceres Edgarum eligerent, ſi epiſcopos aſſertores haberent. Malmsb. fol.* 57.

when they had given up thoſe of their country, ſerv'd only as a pretext for a more rigorous treatment.

During the life of W. Rufus the clergy felt ſo great a ſhare in the general oppreſſion of that reign, and were always ſo diſregarded by him, that they had very little opportunity of furniſhing any circumſtances by their conduct worth relating here. It may not however be amiſs to obſerve, that the promoter and inſtrument of all his oppreſſion and violence, was Ranulph Flambert biſhop of Durham *.

Henry I. had not been long on the throne, before the encroaching ſpirit of the church diſcover'd itſelf in the perſon of Anſelm, archbiſhop of Canterbury. That haughty prelate reſolv'd to wreſt from the king his right of inveſtiture of biſhops and abbots; a prerogative his predeceſſors had enjoy'd without diſturbance, and with great reaſon; for otherwiſe the clergy might have made it one of their pretences for denying, they ow'd the foundation of their authority to the civil power. In purſuance of this deſign, upon the king's ſhewing ſome reſolution at firſt to maintain his right, Anſelm, attended by ſeveral prelates who had reſign'd their biſhopricks, inſolently carried his complaints to Rome, and deſir'd

* *M. Paris.* the

the Pope by his ſole authority to re-inſtate them in their ſees. We may infer from * M. Paris, the good arch-biſhop judg'd it no ſimony in ſo righteous a cauſe, to make uſe of the rhetorick of gold with his holineſs, who fail'd not to grant his requeſt. In this manner did the ambition of that prelate not only invade the juſt rights of the king, but introduc'd a precedent, thro' the want of reſolution in Henry, tending to render both him and his ſucceſſors ſlaves to the papal authority, which never fail'd by its interpoſition in all affairs of this kind to improve them to its own advantage.

Upon the death of Henry we are furniſh'd with a moſt lively inſtance of the regard, the clergy paid to the moſt ſolemn oaths taken in the moſt publick manner. Before the departure of the late king to Normandy he call'd an † aſſembly of the great men, in which the biſhops were the firſt, that ſwore to acknowledge his daughter the empreſs Matilda for their ſovereign, in caſe Henry died without iſſue male. The right of birth undoubtedly pleaded in her behalf, and her deſcent by her mother's ſide from the race of Saxon kings,

* *Tunc ſedes clementiſſima, quæ nulli deeſſe conſuevit (dummodo albi aliquid vel rubei intercedat) præſcriptos pontifices & abbates ad priſtinas dignitates miſerecorditer revocavit. M. Paris, p.* 49.

† *Malmsb. fol.* 99.

kings, was a circumſtance, which could not but greatly recommend her to the Engliſh. However, Henry's death, which fell out in a ſhort time after, was no ſooner known, than the clergy declar'd in favour of Stephen, and by their example not only countenanc'd part of the nobility in the violation of the oath ſo lately taken to Matilda, but by their ſuperiour power in the kingdom deterr'd others from oppoſing their deſigns. The arch-biſhop of Canterbury, the biſhops of Wincheſter, and Saliſbury were three of the richeſt ſubjects in England: the laſt ow'd his riſe, from nothing as it were, to the late king, whoſe will he was ungratefully now going to ſubvert. I will juſt mention what Rapin ſays on this occaſion, who entirely attributes Stephen's advancement to the clergy. " It was (ſays he) a great ad-
" vantage to Stephen to have for him three
" prelates, whoſe intereſt ſecur'd him the ſuf-
" frages of the clergy. This body was then
" ſo powerful, that the lay-lords, who were
" not in the plot, did not think themſelves
" able to oppoſe the deſign, which they ſaw
" was entirely form'd, of placing Stephen on
" the throne; ſince all the biſhops declar'd in
" his favour, not one attempted to ſpeak for
" Matilda, ſo great an influence had the ex-
" ample and authority of the clergy over the

" minds of the nobles and people." How falſe the aſſertions were, on which the biſhops grounded the evaſion of their oaths, appears from the opinion of Malmſbury. That hiſtorian mentioning the reaſon, which the biſhop of Saliſbury alledg'd in his hearing, concludes with ſaying, that he * does not mention it there as giving any credit to thoſe words of a man, who could ſo well accommodate himſelf to all times, as fortune ſhifted the ſcene, but in order to diſcharge his duty as an hiſtorian. Let us now ſee how they behav'd to that Stephen, whom they had placed on the throne. They were not long before they ſhew'd the uſe, they intended to make, of the advancement of a king, who was indebted ſolely to themſelves for it. They ſuppoſed, he would not think it his intereſt to diſturb them in the deſign, they had form'd, of embracing the preſent opportunity to render themſelves formidable, and become independent of him and his ſucceſſors for the future. In order to accompliſh this project, they not only fortify'd ſuch caſtles, as they had already in their hands, but erected ſeveral new ones. They outvied all the nobility in the magnificence of their houſes and retinue, and affected to appear ſo numerouſly attended on all occaſions, that they look'd

* *Malmsb. fol.* 99.

look'd much more like military chiefs at the head of ſo many little armies, than the meek and peaceable paſtors of Chriſt's flock.

It cannot be wonder'd at, that a behaviour of this kind alarm'd the king, and almoſt neceſſitated him to take thoſe ſteps towards depriving ſome of them of their caſtles, which afterwards involv'd him in ſo much trouble. It was not only his own private ſentiments, which determin'd him in that point, but the advice of moſt of the nobles concurr'd with his own opinion, that ſome ſtop ſhould be put to the formidable power of the biſhops *, which increas'd ſo faſt. But however deſirable this might be, it was now not to be effected: the clergy had ſo great an influence over the lower people, that the nation was in a flame at the king's ſeizing the biſhops caſtles. Religion itſelf was look'd upon as invaded, which, as Rapin ſays, was now thought to conſiſt in upholding the church in whatever privileges and immunities, ſhe herſelf was pleas'd to aſſume. The biſhops openly talk'd of oppoſing the king by arms, and became ſo ſtrong, that great numbers of the lay-lords thought it ſafeſt to go over to their ſide. Stephen had indeed ſome time before given the people in general too much cauſe to alter

* *Malmsb. fol.* 102.

the good opinion, they had once entertain'd of him; and we find ſeveral barons had then taken up arms againſt him in defence of their liberty: but that affair had at this time been made up, and, as I before obſerv'd, it was now the ſentiments of moſt of the lay-lords, that the power of the biſhops required a ſtop to be put to it; tho' when the attempt had embroil'd the king in theſe troubles, but few of thoſe lords had recover'd their eſteem for him ſo far, as to aſſert his cauſe with the zeal, they would otherwiſe have done, and draw upon themſelves the fury of a body of men at that time more formidable than their own.

But that the ground of this quarrel was no national cauſe, appears further from hence. Had the point in diſpute concern'd the publick liberty, the king muſt have anſwer'd for his conduct only before the great council of the kingdom; whereas in this caſe he was cited before a ſynod at Wincheſter *, conven'd by the biſhop of that place as legate: which not only ſhews the diſpute to be particular with the biſhops, but was itſelf a greater inſult offer'd the community, than ever Stephen had been guilty of.

During this diſpute, Matilda thought it a favourable juncture to land in England, and claim

* *Malmsb.*

claim her right to the crown. She no ſooner arrived, than the clergy were forward to declare for her: but the biſhop of Wincheſter, who had hitherto chiefly excited and promoted the troubles of the king his brother, begun now to ſee his error in raiſing the ſtorm ſo high, and that his own ruin would be inſeparable from that of his brother. With this conſideration he at firſt did him ſome ſervice; but no ſooner had the chance of war declar'd itſelf in favour of Matilda by Stephen's being taken priſoner, than he again threw up his brother's cauſe, and won by a promiſe, that he ſhould diſpoſe of all eccleſiaſtical preferments, undertook to procure Matilda the ſuffrages of the clergy to elect her queen. In order to this he conven'd a ſynod by his legatine authority, the day before the opening of which he conferr'd in private firſt with the biſhops, then with the abbots, and laſtly with the arch-deacons. When the time appointed for their meeting was come, after he had made a ſpeech, in which he publickly aſſerted * the principal right of chuſing a prince belong'd to the clergy, the ſynod declar'd Matilda queen. It was thus with an unheard-of, and unprecedented inſolence the clergy alone pretended to give the nation a ſovereign without conſulting the

* *Malmſb. fol.* 106.

the barons, nay contrary to the ſentiments of many of them, who had at this time ſent their deputies with thoſe of the city of London to demand Stephen's liberty. But this meſſage had no other effect than to draw an excommunication upon the king and his adherents.

However monſtrous this conduct appears to be, the meaſure of their inſolent and treacherous proceedings was not yet compleated: for in a very ſhort time afterwards the biſhop of Wincheſter having been diſoblig'd by Matilda, he once more deſerted her cauſe; and aſſembling another ſynod at Weſtminſter * he found his brethren nothing loath in undoing, what they had ſo lately done at Wincheſter. Stephen, who was now at liberty, having been exchang'd for the duke of Gloceſter, was again acknowledg'd by them as king, and Matilda in her turn excommunicated with her adherents. This change ſoon render'd her affairs ſo deſperate, that ſhe was obliged to quit this kingdom, and leave Stephen in poſſeſſion of a crown, which he firſt obtain'd, afterwards loſt, and again recover'd by the intrigues and power of the eccleſiaſticks.

The power, the church aſſumed to itſelf in the next reign, and the entire independence on

* *Malmsb. fol.* 108.

on the ſtate, that it laid claim to, evidently appears in the conteſt between Henry II. and Becket. The laity were reduced to a kind of ſlavery by the clergy: whatever outrages they ſuffer'd from them, they durſt not repel for fear of excommunication (the effects of which were at that time ſo terrible,) nor could they expect any redreſs from the laws, ſince the eccleſiaſticks claim'd a privilege of being tried only in their own courts; there every thing was carry'd on with the moſt open partiality; the eccleſiaſticks were only liable to ſlight corrections, and for the moſt heinous crimes puniſh'd no further than with degradation, a ſhort ſuſpenſion, or ſhort confinement.

It was proved *, there had been above a hundred murders committed by church-men ſince the king's acceſſion to the throne, of whom not one had been puniſh'd ſo much as by degradation.

For attempting to redreſs ſuch an unparallel'd enormity the king and the whole body of peers in parliament were treated by this haughty prelate with that inſolence, and open contempt of their authority, as fills every reader of this part of our hiſtory with the utmoſt indignation.

Of

* *Rapin vol. 1. p. 226. Tind. tranſl.*

Of ſuch conſequence is it at all times to prevent every ſtep, which may inſenſibly tend to procure ſuch wealth and power in the clergy, or any other ſet of men, as may create an independency in them; ſince we ſee a prince of ſo much ſpirit, as Henry II. is allowed to be, for endeavouring to retrench that part of eccleſiaſtical uſurpation, which protected criminals from juſtice, forc'd to atone for this ſo unchriſtian and wicked attempt, by the moſt abject condeſcenſion and ſubmiſſion; tho' his deſign had the good wiſhes and concurrence of all the nobility in the kingdom, who at this time groan'd under the eccleſiaſtical yoke.

Richard I's was a reign, in which we find very little ſaid of eccleſiaſtical affairs or perſons. That prince was but a few months in England after he came to the crown. The accounts of that time chiefly concern that romantick expedition of his to the Holy-land ſo expenſive to his country, and fatal to himſelf in being made priſoner by the emperor.

The tyrannical government of king John made the oppoſition, he met with from his barons, an indiſpenſable duty, they ow'd themſelves, their country, and poſterity. The temper of this monarch was ſuch a mixture of folly,

folly, pride, and meanneſs, that it was impoſſible, but he ſhould embroil himſelf with all ſets of men, however different and oppoſite their intereſts might be. Therefore tho' the clergy ſeem to have a great ſhare in the events of this reign, we ſhould however carefully diſtinguiſh the motives of their conduct, as well as conſequences of it, from that of the barons. The firſt troubles of importance in this reign were merely eccleſiaſtical. The Pope's nominating cardinal Langton to the ſee of Canterbury plung'd the kingdom into very great difficulties and miſery. The king's refuſal to admit him as arch-biſhop brought an interdict on the kingdom; and the clergy were ſo far from being diſpleaſed at this uſurpation in the Pope, that thoſe few of them, who would willingly have leſſen'd the general confuſion occaſion'd by the interdict, by continuing to perform the duties of their office, ſuch as reading prayer, burying the dead, and the like, met with continual inſults from the zealots *. This drew upon the eccleſiaſticks the king's utmoſt ſeverity, who ſeized on their lands, impriſoned their perſons, and committed all manner of outrages on them. The interdict was ſoon after follow'd by an excommunication of the king,

* *Rapin vol.* 1. *p.* 269.

king, and the people were abſolv'd by the Pope from their oath of allegiance.

The nation in general had been ſo much oppreſs'd, that the barons took this occaſion to throw off all obedience to king John. Had he been a prince in the eſteem of his ſubjects, no doubt they would have greatly reſented this inſult to their ſovereign. But the conſequence was, the king to ſupport himſelf againſt the lords, found himſelf obliged to ſubmit to the holy ſee, whoſe reconciliation was to be purchaſed on no other terms than a reſignation of his crown after the moſt ignominious manner to the Pope, in the perſon of his legate; which he was to receive back, and hold ever after as his vaſſal, and as ſuch to pay a yearly tribute. The general defection of the barons, which follow'd, tho' they made a political uſe of theſe troubles, yet was a thing quite diſtinct from them, and founded wholly on principles of liberty. And as the grounds were different, ſo were the conſequences: the firſt render'd the kingdom tributary to the ſee of Rome, the latter procur'd the ſigning of Magna Charta, that baſis of the liberty of England ever ſince.

It will perhaps be ſaid that after the reconciliation of John to the Pope, from which time he condemn'd the barons oppoſition, and

ſent a legate to reconcile the king to the clergy, yet they ſtill refuſed to comply with the terms propos'd, and ſeveral of them adher'd firmly to the cauſe of the barons.

But we may with great reaſon conclude the conſideration of their own particular intereſt was what influenc'd them chiefly on that occaſion; for the reparations ſettled by the * Pope for the damages, the clergy had ſuſtain'd from the king during the interdict †, fell infinitely ſhort of their real loſſes: for which reaſon they were entirely diſſatisfy'd at the legate's determination.

Nor can we well imagine that arch-biſhop Langton, who, for his own private advancement, could ſuffer himſelf to be made the cauſe of ſo much miſery to the kingdom, and of the moſt ignominious proſtitution of the honour of the Engliſh crown and nation, could afterwards act in defence of its liberty, from the generous and diſintereſted motives of publick ſpirit.

Nothing could be worſe concerted than the deſign, Henry III. form'd, of freeing himſelf from the reſtraint, he thought the lords had laid on his father by Magna Charta. Inſtead of gaining the clergy to his intereſt, and thereby making them ſubſervient to his deſigns, he

* *M. Paris.* † *Rapin vol.* 1. *p.* 274.

not only made them partake of the general oppreſſion of his reign, but ſuffer'd them to be devour'd by the inſatiable extortion of the Pope's legates. The king vainly thought all he had to do, was to keep fair with the holy ſee; the Pope knew how to make the proper uſe of this tempter in the king; and ſince John's reſignation ſeem'd to conſider England as a tributary country, which he might plunder at diſcretion. He had now no occaſion for the aſſiſtance of the clergy, who, whilſt they found their account in it, promoted all his deſigns, and exalted his uſurped power. But as the caſe now ſtood, they found a blind complaiſance for the orders of the Pope, and his demands of money, would only ſerve to ruin them. They had nothing to hope from the king, who kept no meaſures with them: they beheld with grief all vacant benefices beſtow'd on foreigners, inſomuch that at one time no leſs than three hundred eccleſiaſticks were ſent over. Whoſoever looks into M. Paris will find him every were full of inſtances of the Pope's extortion and oppreſſion towards the Engliſh clergy, in which the king went hand in hand with him. The clergy were not ſo blind to their own intereſt, as not to be ſenſible it was now their buſineſs to join with the people, in condemning Henry's proceedings:

ings: accordingly we find thro' this reign they always ſhew'd great backwardneſs in complying with the exactions of the King and Pope, and ſometimes they had the reſolution to give them a down-right refuſal, and openly to declare they would no longer ſubmit to ſuch oppreſſions.

But that their regard for the intereſt of the laity was no greater than at other times, plainly appears from the open attempts they themſelves made towards ſubverting the laws, which my lord Coke mentions in his preface to the articuli cleri *. "In the 42d year of Henry III. "Boniface arch-biſhop of Canterbury made "divers and many canons and conſtitutions "provincial, directly againſt the laws of the "realm, and tending to uſurp and encroach "upon many matters which apparently be-"long'd to the common law; but notwith-"ſtanding the greatneſs of Boniface, and that "divers of the judges of the realm were of the "clergy, and all the great officers of the realm, "as chancellor, treaſurer, privy ſeal, &c. were "prelates, yet the judges proceeded according "to the laws of the realm, and ſtill kept, tho' "with great difficulty, the eccleſiaſtical courts "within their juſt and proper limits." We may reaſonably conclude, had this king taken the

* *Second vol. of Inſt.*

the method, ſome of his more politick ſucceſſors have done, of attaching the clergy to his intereſt by ſhewing a zeal for their pretended rights, and a readineſs in contributing to the advancement of their riches and power, and had himſelf only plunder'd and haraſs'd his other ſubjects; he would have met with their full concurrence in his deſigns: and all precautions in the laity for the ſecurity of their liberty, would have been cenſur'd as unwarrantable, and rebellious. For what could not be expected from a ſet of men, whoſe power and wealth were become ſo dangerous to liberty, and their endeavours to encreaſe them ſo ſtrenuous, that, as the great man juſt quoted ſays, it was with great difficulty the laws of the land were reſcued from their all-engroſſing ambition?

In this and the following reign, we may obſerve, how difficult it was by the wiſeſt proviſions and reſtrictions of the law to prevent the clergy from evading ſuch ſtatutes as ſet any bounds to their wealth or power. At the time of ſigning Magna Charta by Henry the barons were ſo ſenſible of the dangerous conſequence of the immenſe riches, the church was every day acquiring, that they inſerted a clauſe to prevent the further diſpoſition of lands to religious houſes. But the clergy found

ſo

ſo many ways to creep out of that ſtatute, and their poſſeſſions continued ſtill to increaſe ſo faſt, that in the 7th of Edward I. the ſtatute of mortmain was enacted to the general joy of the people. The words intended to provide againſt their devices are ſo ſtrong, that I will inſert them here: " * Quod nullus religioſus " aut alius quicunque terras aut tenementa " aliqua emere vel vendere ſub colore dona- " tionis aut termini, (and to prevent all other inventions and evaſions, theſe general words were added) " aut ratione alterius tituli terras " aut tenementa ab aliquo recipere aut alio " quovis modo, arte vel ingenio, ſibi appro- " priare præſumat, ſub forisfactura eorundo- " rum."

A man would have thought, ſays my lord Coke, that this ſhould have prevented all new devices; but they ſoon found out an evaſion for this ſtatute alſo.

In the progreſs of this reign we ſee the grounds of their oppoſition in the former fully made out by the willingneſs, the clergy ſhew'd, in making uſe of the Pope's authority, whenever it chimed with their own intereſt: they now made a bull of Boniface VIII. † a pretence to exempt them from the payment of any taxes to ſecular princes, without the conſent

* *See lord Coke's magna charta, chap.* 36.
† *M. Weſt.* 405. *Walſing. p.* 68.

ſent of the holy ſee; and by ſo doing, openly put themſelves upon a foot of independence on the reſt of the kingdom; and even aſſum'd a ſuperiority, by declaring they were not obliged to join with them in contributing to the publick expences.

In the cloſe of this reign the biſhops give us a further more convincing proof of what I have before ſaid, that hitherto whenever they ſhew'd a diſapprobation of any innovations or oppreſſions, it was merely becauſe they had no ſhare in the profits. Edward, notwithſtanding the encomiums of ſome hiſtorians, had no leſs fondneſs for arbitrary power than his predeceſſors, tho' his ſuperiour underſtanding made him ſenſible, how neceſſary it was to conceal it; of which he was convinc'd by the reſolute behaviour of ſome of the barons. However, towards the decline of his life he begun to act with leſs reſerve in that reſpect; and having procur'd from Rome a diſpenſation of his oath in regard to the two charters, he by virtue of a grant from thence levy'd the tenth of all eccleſiaſtical revenues for two years; in conſideration of which, the Pope reſerv'd to himſelf the firſt fruits of all the benefices. Here one would imagine, that the chief men of the clergy were concern'd in the greateſt degree

to

to prevent any innovation of this kind, which ſo particularly affected their own body; but in this care was taken, that the biſhops ſhould have a fellow-feeling, and therefore they quietly ſubmitted to it: for * M. of Weſtminſter tells us, the Pope was induced to this thro' the covetouſneſs of the biſhops, who ſubmitted to this innovation on condition, that they might enjoy one year's profits of all vacant benefices in their gift. At the ſame time the parliament † ſhew'd a more diſintereſted regard for the clergy, than their own heads had done, by prohibiting the collectors to gather the tax, tho' the power of the king made their prohibitions uſeleſs.

Never was the parliament more ſenſible of the eccleſiaſtical yoke, or more ready to come to reſolutions of putting a ſtop to the papal oppreſſions, than under Edward II. But the weakneſs of that king, and the circumſtances, he was in, made all their endeavours ineffectual. The clergy were ſo ſatisfy'd of his weakneſs, and ſo intoxicated with their own pride and power, that they committed the moſt unparallel'd inſult and violence to publick juſtice, the laws of the realm, and therein to the whole nation. Adam Orleton ‖, biſhop of Hereford, having been indicted of high-

 treaſon,

* *Mat. Weſtm.* 457. † *Rapin.* ‖ *Walſing.* p. 119.

treaſon, for being concern'd with Mortimer earl of March in his open rebellion; the archbiſhops of Canterbury, York, and Dublin, with ſeveral of their ſuffragans, came to the bar, and by force took him away, threatning to excommunicate all that ſhould oppoſe them, and proceed againſt him: and this they did under pretext of the canons * of the church, though the benefit of clergy, however they had found means of late to extend it, was never allow'd to reach to high-treaſon againſt the king. And all this was done in defence of a man the moſt abandon'd by every virtue, and of whoſe character nothing can convey a more perfect idea, than his own order afterwards to the keepers of the unhappy Edward: "Edwardum occidere nolite timere "bonum eſt."

Under Edward III. (moſt eminently the beſt and greateſt of our princes, who undeniably deſerves thoſe encomiums given him by hiſtorians, which flattery or want of diſcernment made them too apt to beſtow on others) more vigorous methods were taken by the king and parliament to deliver the nation from the ſo long complain'd-of papal oppreſſions. With that intent the ſtatutes of proviſors and præmunire were enacted: the firſt

* *See lord Coke's 2d Inſt. p.* 634, *and* 635.

firſt to prevent the court of Rome from diſpoſing of eccleſiaſtical benefices contrary to the right of the king, or any other perſon; the ſecond to prevent the ſubjects of England carrying cauſes to any foreign or other court, the cognizance of which belong'd to the king's courts. However, notwithſtanding theſe precautions, we find the grievances ſtill continued, and the Pope exacted as a tax from eccleſiaſtical dignities, "five * times as much as the tax "of all the profits that appertain'd to the king "by the year of this whole realm." Accordingly we find hardly any meeting of parliament in this reign, in which theſe grievances are not complain'd of, notwithſtanding the ſtatutes made, and ſo frequently confirmed for preventing them.

Now when we conſider the unanimous and conſtant opinion of both king and parliament on this head, and the vigorous reſolutions, they ſo often came to; can we reaſonably account, why the meaſures taken by them ſhould prove ineffectual any other way than from the timidity or connivance of the clergy themſelves? both of which I think appear pretty plain. The parliament expreſſly mention the firſt, in ſaying "†the whole clergy "were ſo obedient to the Pope's collector, that

 "they

* *Cotton's Parl. Roll.* 50 *Ed.* 3. † *Parl. Roll.* 50 *Ed.* 3.

" they did not dare diſpleaſe him." And that they did more than barely connive at appeals from the king's courts, contrary to the ſtatute of præmunire, appears, in that they themſelves preſum'd to take cognizance of appeals from thoſe courts in their own eccleſiaſtical courts. " And to reverſe judgment given in the king's " courts to the prejudice and diſheriſon of the " king and commonalty:" as the parliament of the 21ſt of Ed. III. recite in their complaint.

That the parliaments in this reign were no leſs apprehenſive of the power and encroachments of the clergy at home, than of the ſee of Rome, appears from ſeveral parliamentary petitions * and reſolutions on that head. At one time we find them praying the king, that remedy might be had againſt the oppreſſion of ordinaries, and their officers. At another time they make their requeſt to the king, that " no † ordinance might be made at " the petition of the clergy without conſent " of parliament, and that no man might " be bound by any their conſtitutions made " for their advantage."

The clergy had for ſome time paſt intruded themſelves into all the great places of truſt, power, and profit in the ſtate, the civil courts, and

* *Parl. Roll.* 25 *Ed.* 3. † *Parl. Roll.* 51 *Ed.* 3.

and king's houſhold *. The lords and commons therefore repreſented to the king, that the realm had long been govern'd by churchmen, to the great prejudice of the crown; and therefore requir'd, that for the future the great officers of the king's courts might be only laymen.

The juſtneſs of theſe complaints, and of the precautions of the parliament, is fully confirm'd by the conduct of the clergy in the following reign. Richard II. had not been long on the throne, before they took the advantage of the youth and weakneſs of that prince to procure his conſent to an ordinance for the impriſoning of ſuch, as they ſhould think fit to declare hereticks: and this entirely without conſent of parliament, a moſt notorious outrage, if ever there was any, upon the eſtabliſh'd conſtitution of this kingdom. But what meaſures would they not take to deſtroy a growing ſect, ſuch as the Wicliffites, who propagated principles of ſo damnable a nature, as tended to deſtroy the temporal grandeur and power of the church? a doctrine that in all ages will never fail being cenſur'd by moſt of them, as highly heretical. But the houſe of commons were ſo ſenſible of this heinous encroachment upon the rights of the people,

* *Walſing. p.* 186, *& Parl. Roll.*

people, that the ordinance was repeal'd by the king next parliament; and the declaration of the commons on this occaſion had ſo much becoming reſolution and ſpirit in it, that it may not be amiſs to ſet down their own words, "that * it was never their meaning to be juſ-"tified, and bind themſelves and ſucceſſors "to the prelates, no more than their an-"ceſtors had done before them." A reſolution ever worthy to be remember'd and follow'd by all ſucceeding parliaments.

I took notice in the laſt reign, that the continued oppreſſions of the Pope, notwithſtanding the repeated reſolutions of the king and parliament againſt them, muſt have been owing to the connivance of the clergy: the following inſtance under Richard is a further and full confirmation of their backwardneſs to retrench any of the pretended prerogatives of the ſee of Rome. "The † arch-biſhops "of Canterbury and York for themſelves, "and the whole clergy of their provinces, "make their ſolemn proteſtation in open "parliament, that they in no wiſe meant "or would aſſent to any ſtatute or law made "in reſtraint of the Pope's authority, but "utterly withſtood the ſame."

The

* *Parl. Roll.* 6 *Rich.* 2. † *Parl. Roll.* 13 *Rich.* 2.

The ſowſing proſtitution of the clergy, (an expreſſion aptly made uſe of) and their ſuperiour talents in doing with a better grace the very ſame profligate and ſlaviſh jobs, in which the laity have at any time equally concurr'd, is worth obſerving from a paſſage in an hiſtorian that treats of that reign. When Richard II. had at laſt by corruption, or putting out ſuch returning officers whoſe complaiſance for his deſigns he ſuſpected, got a parliament chiefly pack'd up of ſuch perſons, as he knew would be at his devotion, (the firſt, if I miſtake not, that was openly procured in that manner;) after the ſeſſion was open'd by a time-ſerving ſpeech of the biſhop of Exeter, it was propos'd by the king's miniſters, that the acts of grace paſs'd nine years before in favour of certain lords, who had oppoſed the king in his attempts upon the publick * liberty, ſhould be repeal'd. The prelates without any heſitation not only gave their aſſent, but, by the expreſſion of the hiſtorian, ſeem'd to have uſed arguments to ſhew thoſe acts to be revokable: upon which, ſays he, the temporal lords ſeeing the clergy approved of it, gave alſo their aſſent, more induc'd to it thro' fear of the king, than any conviction of their minds. Now tho' their con-

* *Walſing. p.* 354.

concurrence is abſolutely inexcuſable; yet the reader, I believe, will agree with me in obſerving a manifeſt difference in their behaviour. For the clergy, no reaſon is aſſign'd by the hiſtorian, but their forwardneſs in the affair ſeems abandon'd like that of men hackney'd in proſtitution; the other have the example of the clergy, and the fear of the king mention'd as determining them. And that I may not be thought to have exaggerated this matter, I will give the reader Walſingham's own words.

" Hi importunis clamoribus petierunt ut " chartæ perdonationum in primis revocaren- " tur & annullarentur, ſuper quibus requiſiti " prælati de facile indicarunt tales chartas " fore revocabiles, non attendentes quod hu- " jus gratiæ revocatio perſonæ regis maxime " repugnabat; cum miſerecordia ſit ſolii re- " galis confirmatio, & qui tollit miſerecor- " diam, tollit ſolii regalis firmamentum. Con- " ſequenter domini temporales videntes aſſen- " ſum cleri, cenſuerunt & ipſi hujus chartas " annullandas, magis timore regis dicti, quam " mentium ratione."

Glorious pre-eminence of the clergy, even in a parliament compos'd of men cull'd out from amongſt the whole people for ſervility and corruption!

Henry

Henry IV. a haughty deſigning prince, who tho' he ow'd his crown purely to a parliamentary right, yet ever affected to build his claim on other foundations, not only weak, but abſolutely falſe, was ſenſible, that he had againſt him a powerful faction in the kingdom, and that his conduct was ſuch, as could not fail adding to the number of his enemies.

His policy in taking all methods, and being moſt vigilant to ſecure the poſſeſſion of his crown, was the moſt diſtinguiſhing qualification of his genius: and he had too much diſcernment not to ſee, how neceſſary it was for carrying on his ends to have the clergy firmly in his intereſt. That body was now become more than ever wealthy, powerful, and inſolent. Accordingly, Henry made it a maxim, to do nothing, which might diſoblige them, but to take every opportunity of teſtifying a regard for their intereſt. He knew by that means, however ill he uſed his other ſubjects, he ſhould ſtill preſerve the reputation of a pious prince, zealous for the cauſe and honour of God, which could not but greatly contribute to baffle any oppoſition to his meaſures. The clergy had all along ſo conniv'd at the pretenſions of the court of Rome, that the endeavours of former parliaments to

put a ſtop to that abuſe prov'd ineffectual. The people groan'd for a reformation; therefore, tho' the king was oblig'd at firſt in compliance with his parliament to revive the ſtatutes of præmunire, yet never was the breach of them more wink'd at, than in this reign. To give the eccleſiaſticks a more publick inſtance of his zeal, Henry at their petition procur'd the bloody act to paſs in parliament for the burning, ſuch as they ſhould declare hereticks. Immediately the poor Lollards, who had incurr'd their unrelenting diſpleaſure for broaching doctrines repugnant to their temporal grandeur, are without mercy deliver'd to the flames; and the churches ſound with the encomiums of a king, who had given ſuch unqueſtionable proof of his piety and zeal.

But a parliament, that met ſome time after, had not the ſame complaiſance for the clergy. This was that which by way of reproach they have call'd the illiterate parliament, repreſenting them as a ſet of men choſen according to the king's private letters, merely on account of their ignorance; an error moſt people ſince, and amongſt the reſt a very eminent man in our law *, has been led into. But theſe letters were in reality writs of ſummons, in which

* *Pryn's pref. to parl. roll.*

which there were directions, in purſuance of a ſtatute made in Edward the IIId's time, excluding all ſheriffs and practiſing lawyers from being elected: the reaſon of which was, that ſuch procur'd themſelves to be elected merely to ſerve views of their own, and did not faithfully diſcharge their duty to their country. Inſtead therefore of looking upon this parliament in the light, in which it has been repreſented, we are to conſider it as compos'd of honeſt, diſintereſted country gentlemen, who, having no private views to ſerve, came up fraught with the ſentiments of thoſe they repreſented, who impatiently wiſh'd to ſee themſelves freed from the eccleſiaſtical yoke.

Accordingly, when the king, laying his neceſſities before them, demanded an aid, they remonſtrated the hardſhip of burthening his ſubjects with further taxes, when at the ſame time the clergy contributed nothing to the neceſſities of the ſtate, tho' poſſeſs'd of the third part of all the lands in the kingdom; wallowing, to the neglect of their duty, in luxury and idleneſs: that therefore it was their deſire that his wants ſhould be ſupply'd out of the eccleſiaſtical revenues, as not only juſt, and agreeable to the ſentiments of the people, but in the main of real ſervice to the church itſelf.

We may eaſily imagine, what treatment a propoſition of this kind met with from the clergy. The * arch-biſhop of Canterbury, who was preſent, could not forbear treating the commons in the moſt arrogant and inſolent manner: he even told them in a menacing way, no attempt of that ſort ſhould be offer'd the church without impunity; and that it ſhould be at their peril if they ſeized any of its revenues; that for his part he would ſooner loſe his life than ſee it depriv'd of them.

The king in purſuance of the maxim, he had laid down, to keep well with the clergy, took this opportunity to aſſure the arch-biſhop of his reſolution to maintain the church in its full poſſeſſions, and of his deſire rather to increaſe than diminiſh its ſplendour. The commons, not intimidated by the threats of any dignify'd church-man, went on and prepar'd a bill for ſupplying the king's neceſſities out of the revenues of the church; but when the bill came to the lords, they refus'd their concurrence, thro' the cabals of the biſhops, who had gain'd a conſiderable party in that houſe, for having oppoſed the commons not long before in a laudable deſign, they had, of ſupplying the king's wants, by a revocation of

* *Walſing. p.* 371.

of ſeveral lands alienated from the crown by grants in the late reign, and ſquander'd upon favourites, to the great impoveriſhing of the crown, and burthening the people; which revocation would greatly have affected ſeveral peers, who at that time were in poſſeſſion of ſuch lands. Here we ſee the biſhops oppoſers in general of every ſtep taken for the eaſe of the ſubject, and treating the repreſentative body of the whole people in parliament with inſolence, ill language, and threats for the attempt.

Tho' the commons were diſappointed this time in their deſign, yet the grievance was too generally felt, and a redreſs too much deſir'd by the people for them to ſit down diſmay'd at this repulſe. In a parliament aſſembled ſome time after they renew'd their former inſtances in regard to the clergy's revenues, the conſequences alſo of the ſtatute againſt the Lollards obtain'd by influence and cabal were now known to be ſo terrible, that they likewiſe deſir'd a repeal of it; at leaſt, an amendment. As to their firſt inſtances, they ſet forth, that the king might eaſily ſeize out of the revenues of the eccleſiaſticks, what would be ſufficient to provide in a moſt ample manner for fifteen earls, fifteen hundred knights, ſix thouſand two hundred eſquires, and a hundred

dred hoſpitals. But they had the mortification to have their remonſtrances meet with no better ſucceſs with the king, who was now more than ever confirm'd in his reſolution of being well with the church. Therefore he not only refus'd his aſſent, but did it in a moſt arbitrary manner, forbidding them for the future to preſume to meddle with ſuch affairs *; and as for the ſtatutes againſt the Lollards, he was ſo far from allowing any mitigation, that he ſaid, he could wiſh they were made more rigorous. To pleaſe the eccleſiaſticks ſtill further with an open affront upon the commons, he affected at that time to ſign a warrant for the burning of a poor Lollard, who ſuffer'd death with great reſolution.

If the parliament (as Rapin ſays) that firſt moved the leſſening the clergy's revenues was ſtiled unlearn'd, it may well be ſuppoſed this met with no better treatment. The names of lollard and heretick were plentifully beſtow'd: they were ſet forth as a ſet of men who were for the deſtruction of religion itſelf. They were however ſo ſenſible of their ill uſage, that upon the king's demanding a power to levy a ſubſidy during life, tho' the parliament ſhould not ſit, they boldly refus'd it him. The commons would alſo have deny'd him a ſupply

* *Walſing. p.* 379.

ſupply for his preſent occaſions, ſince he had not thought proper to receive it by the methods, they propos'd, had not the king forc'd them to a compliance by the ſame arbitrary manner, he had ſucceeded in once before; that was, by keeping them ſitting, till the inconvenience of not being diſmiſs'd oblig'd them to conſent to his demands: a moſt remarkable abuſe of prerogative, and tending to deſtroy all freedom in their reſolutions! But notwithſtanding this, he had done enough in this meeting to be look'd upon as the champion of religion, and darling of its prieſts. We find him cry'd up by them as a prince endued with mildneſs, piety, and every virtue; tho' whoever will carefully look into that reign, will find his conduct perfectly tyrannical, and moſt ungrateful in a prince, who had no other title to his crown than the good-will of the people, and free gift of parliament, whoſe rights he ever try'd to ſubvert. To conclude therefore with Mr. Rapin's obſervation on this reign: "When I conſider (ſays he) the ex-
"ceſſive commendations beſtow'd on that
"prince, I cannot help ſuſpecting, that the
"glory of being the firſt burner of here-
"ticks, and of protecting the clergy againſt
"the attempts of the houſe of commons,
"were the main ſprings of all their enco-

" miums. It is well known, the eccleſiaſticks " are as zealous in praiſing their benefactors, " as in blackening their oppoſers."

No ſooner was Henry IV. dead, than the clergy determin'd to ſecure themſelves for the future againſt all attempts to leſſen their revenues, by taking advantage of the complaiſance, that is uſually met with from young princes in the beginning of their reigns. They did not doubt, but ſuch attempts had been greatly promoted by the doctrine of the Lollards. Therefore as thoſe principles were countenanc'd by ſeveral men of the greateſt rank, and higheſt eſteem of any in the kingdom, they reſolv'd to lay the ax to the root of the tree, and by boldly attacking the patrons of the ſect, deter all others from preſuming to advance any propoſitions, which they ſhould diſapprove of, that might render them liable to be ſuſpected of Wickliffite principles. In purſuance of this reſolution the arch-biſhop of Canterbury waited on the king, and repreſented to him the great growth of hereſy, which could not fail drawing down the wrath of heaven on the kingdom; and the glory it would be to a young monarch to begin his reign with engaging in the cauſe of God, by defending the church from hereticks, for which heaven would certainly crown all his under-

takings

takings with ſucceſs. Thus ſaid Neſtorius once to the younger Theodoſius; "Give me, "O emperor, the earth weeded from here-"ticks, and I in my turn will give you hea-"ven; deſtroy with me the heretick, and I "will deſtroy the Perſian with you." The arch-biſhop then inform'd him, that Sir John Oldcaſtle baron of Cobham, a domeſtick of his own, was the moſt open abetter of the doctrine of the Lollards *; and therefore he deſir'd, he might be allow'd to proceed againſt him with the utmoſt ſeverity and rigour.

The king anſwer'd him in ſuch a manner, as ſhew'd, he was far from approving of force for reclaiming people from errors in religion; but however told him, that if he could not by talking to Sir John Oldcaſtle reſtore him to the right way, he would then give leave for a proceſs againſt him.

This lord was a man the moſt eſteem'd of any in the kingdom, and particularly dear to the king, as Walſingham the monk owns, for his conſummate probity. Notwithſtanding, the king finding him unmoveable as to his opinions, no longer oppos'd the clergy's requeſt, and he was accordingly condemn'd to be burnt, tho'

* *Walſing. p.* 383.

tho' for ſome time he avoided ſuffering the ſentence by an eſcape out of priſon.

The king in his diſcourſe with the archbiſhop had diſcover'd too much moderation in his opinions for the clergy to be able to have their full deſire upon their enemies, eſpecially as he did not ſeem very ſollicitous to have Oldcaſtle retaken. It was their intereſt (ſays Rapin) that the king ſhould have other ſentiments more agreeable to the barbarous zeal, with which eccleſiaſticks are generally animated. In order thereto they repreſented the Lollards as men, that not only ſought the deſtruction of the eſtabliſh'd church and religion, but even of the king's perſon and ſtate itſelf. To confirm him in ſuch a belief, they father'd upon them a more abſurd and ſenſeleſs plot, than ever was invented by the moſt profligate delatores employ'd by the cruelleſt of the Roman emperors for ſuch purpoſes. The poor Lollards, ſince a * proclamation, the king had made to ſuppreſs their aſſemblies, had continued their meetings with great ſecrecy in woods, and other unfrequented places in the country for the worſhip of God in their own manner. Upon theſe occaſions ſome of them choſe St. Giles's fields near London, where they thought to be conceal'd by buſhes,

* *Rapin vol.* 1. *p.* 507.

buſhes, and ſhrubs, that grew there: but being diſcover'd by the clergy, the king was immediately told, that Oldcaſtle at the head of twenty thouſand Lollards were in the fields, with a deſign to kill the king and his brothers, and all the lords ſpiritual and temporal, who were not their friends. Alarm'd at this information, Henry, who was at Eltham, immediately march'd to London to attack this powerful body of conſpirators. He arriv'd about midnight, and finding about fourſcore perſons, fell upon them, and kill'd about twenty, and took moſt of the reſt priſoners. The poor wretches, knowing how liable they were to the inſults of their perſecutors, had unfortunately brought arms with them, which probably ſerv'd as a pretence to convince the king of the deſign; and that their accuſation might have the greater weight, means were found by threats or promiſes to prevail with ſome to confeſs the fact, tho' the abſurdity was unſurmountable to every conſidering man. For inſtead of twenty thouſand to execute ſo great a deſign, there were only a few mean people with none of great rank; and as for Oldcaſtle himſelf, he was not preſent. But it ſeems the clergy gain'd a great point by it in rendering the Lollards odious to the king, and obtaining a vaſt price to be ſet on Old-

caſtle's head, who was ſoon after taken, and fell a ſacrifice to their malice and cruelty. The whole behaviour of Henry towards this great man gives us no advantageous idea of the integrity of that prince, ſince he acted intirely in oppoſition to his own declar'd ſentiments, and ſacrific'd a man, he had the greateſt eſteem for; to which he could have no other motive than to gain the clergy to his intereſt, and to prevent from them any interruption in the ambitious projects, he was probably at that time meditating. As to the pretended conſpiracy, he had too much ſenſe really to credit it, the abſurdity of which, if not at firſt, yet he certainly ſoon after muſt have been convinc'd of, tho' he had never the ingenuity to own it, or act accordingly. Sir Robert Cotton, in his abridgment of the parliament-rolls, ſpeaking of the parliament that met at this time, in which the Lollards were ſo perſecuted, makes this remark. "The clergy, at this their own "parliament, ceaſe not to rage and roar af-"ter chriſtian blood, tanquam leones ru-"gientes; and whoſoever did the fault, they "put John Porter in the Stocks, and cried "crucify Chriſt, and deliver us Barrabas; for "now all horrible miſchiefs whatſoever were "imputed to the poor Lollards."

Biſhop

Biſhop * Burnet in his hiſtory of the reformation tells us, the diſingenuous and inhuman way, the clergy had, of dealing with the Lollards: " which was in their proceedings againſt " them always to mix ſome capital errors, " which all chriſtians rejected, with thoſe, for " which they accus'd them; and ſome parti- " culars being prov'd, they gave it out, that " they were guilty of them all, to repreſent " them the more odious," of which he gives us ſome exexamples.

It was not the Lollards alone that in this reign were convinc'd of the neceſſity of leſſening the revenues of the church: for a parliament, that agreed to the ſevereſt ſtatutes againſt thoſe miſerable people, ſhew'd the greateſt earneſtneſs for reducing the clergy within proper bounds.

It was an artifice of the clergy at that time to confound every body, that oppos'd their temporal grandeur, under the general name of Lollards, and to render them and their deſigns odious repreſented them as acting from heretical principles; in the ſame manner as in a latter reign every man, that diſcover'd any zeal for liberty againſt the arbitrary deſigns of the court and church, was branded with the name of puritan. And in this I have the concurrence

* *Hiſt. of the refor. vol.* 1. *p.* 29.

rence of the learned author laſt mention'd, who tells us, that " when * the clergy had " their authority fortify'd with ſuch ſevere " laws, they became more cruel and inſolent " than ever. And if any man deny'd them " any part of that reſpect, or of thoſe advan- " tages, to which they pretended, he was pre- " ſently brought under the ſuſpicion of hereſy, " and vex'd with impriſonments, and articles " were brought againſt him."

But the parliament, I juſt now ſpoke of, were ſo apprehenſive of this artifice, that they agreed to every propoſal of the clergy for the extirpation of what was then call'd hereſy; ſo that all the pulpits in the kingdom ſounded their praiſes. Therefore, when the commons preſented an addreſs for ſeizing their revenues, they were thunder-ſtruck. There was no having recourſe to their uſual method of repreſenting as Lollards, whomſoever they diſliked; ſo that they had no way of diverting the impending danger, but by animating the young king to a war with France, and in order to carry it on, to compound for the reſignation of the alien priories. Tho' of all the numerous and bloody wars, the clergy have engaged the world in, they may be ſaid to have the beſt excuſe for this; yet I cannot think the arch-

* *Hiſt. of the refor. vol.* 1. *p.* 27.

arch-biſhop's ſpeech on the occaſion quite agreeable with the peace-making character of a chriſtian divine, howſoever it might have appear'd from the mouth of an enterprizing ſtateſman.

From this time to that of Henry VIII. the kingdom was ſo much engaged in other * matters, that we have few or no accounts of the proceedings of eccleſiaſticks worth taking up the reader's time. It is probable they would have made great advantages from the weakneſs of Henry VI. had not ſo many troubles at court, the war with France, and the misfortunes of this reign prevented any attention to church-affairs. The ſame reaſons for the moſt part ſubſiſted in the following reigns, which were alſo taken up with domeſtick troubles. As for Henry VII. his whole thoughts were ſo employ'd in maintaining a quiet poſſeſſion of the crown, of which he was beyond meaſure jealous, and on hoarding up money, that he avoided all occaſions of ſuch diſputes, which might have given diſturbance to either.

During the firſt eighteen years of his reign, king Henry VIII. was a moſt faithful ſon of the ſee of Rome, as the learned author of the hiſtory of the reformation tells us, except in one matter only, which ſeem'd to leſſen the greatneſs

* *Rapin.*

greatneſs of the clergy. As this one affair was of very great importance, and will ſerve fully to ſet forth the temper of the clergy at this time, and alſo furniſhes us with a moſt flagrant inſtance of the power they had aſſum'd, and their moſt pernicious and inſolent abuſe of that power; I will give the reader as ſhort an account of it, as poſſible, from biſhop Burnet, eſpecially, as during the courſe of this affair a ſcene of cruelties came to light towards a perſon, who had offended the eccleſiaſticks, which were nothing inferiour to thoſe of the moſt inhuman tyrants.

In the fourth * year of this reign it was enacted in parliament, that all murderers and robbers ſhould be deny'd the benefit of clergy. Tho' the reaſonableneſs of this law, one would have thought, was ſufficient to make it paſs, yet to take off all objections there was added, that all ſuch as were within the holy orders of biſhop, prieſt, or deacon, ſhould be excepted; and it was alſo to continue in force only till the next parliament. Tho' this gave the greateſt ſatisfaction to the people, the clergy were ſo offended, that the moſt inferiour perſons, who were any way related to the church, ſhould be proceeded againſt by the laity, that the act by their oppoſition was ſuffer'd to determine

* *Hiſt. of the refor. vol.* 1. *p.* 13.

determine next parliament. But ſee the effects of an ill-judged compliance with whatſoever that body of men ſhall at any time be pleas'd to call their privileges: they were not ſatisfy'd, that it was ſuffer'd to expire, but with great audaciouſneſs reſolv'd to fix a publick cenſure on this act of the legiſlature. Accordingly the abbot of Winchelcomb openly preach'd againſt it at St. Paul's croſs.

As this could not fail making a noiſe, the temporal lords and houſe of commons concurr'd in petitioning the king to ſuppreſs the growing inſolence of the clergy. Upon this a hearing was appointed before the king with all the judges and his temporal council. It will be too tedious to inſert here the particulars of the diſpute, which are to be ſeen in the hiſtory of the reformation: but in ſhort, Dr. Standiſh, who was eccleſiaſtical council for the king, maintain'd his arguments againſt the immunities of the church with ſo much reaſon, and ſo clearly confuted the aſſertions of the abbot, that all the laity preſent were ſo confirm'd in their former opinions, that the biſhops were moved to order the abbot to make a recantation of his ſermon in the place, where he had preach'd it: but they all flatly refus'd to do it, and openly juſtify'd the aſſertions of the abbot in every point. As this was fol-

low'd by very great heats in parliament, an affair, that fell out juſt after, made the matter to be proſecuted ſtill more warmly the Michaelmas term following.

One Richard Hunne, a merchant-taylor in London, was ſued in the eccleſiaſtical court by a Middleſex clerk for refuſing a mortuary, which the clerk pretended was due to him on account of a child of Hunne's, that had died five weeks old. As this ſpiritual court ſat by the legate's authority, therefore was a foreign court, Hunne was advis'd to ſue the clerk in a præmunire. The clergy were touch'd to the quick at this, and uſed all their arts to faſten hereſy on Hunne; and having found Wickliffe's bible in his cuſtody, he was taken up, and put in the Lollards tower at St. Paul's, and had ſeveral articles of hereſy objected to him by the biſhop of London. On his examination he deny'd them in the manner charg'd upon him; but own'd he had ſaid ſome things, which might ſeem to tend that way, for which he was ſorry, and aſk'd God's pardon, and ſubmitted to the biſhop's correction. For this, ſays our author, he ſhould have been enjoin'd penance, and ſet at liberty. But as he ſtill continued his ſuit in the king's court, he was uſed in a barbarous manner; for ſoon after he was found hang'd in the cham-

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ber, where he was priſoner. This was given out to be done by himſelf; but when the coroner held his inqueſt on the body, ſo many circumſtances appear'd, that made it undeniably evident, he was murder'd; upon which the dead body was acquitted, and the murder charg'd upon the officers of the priſon: and by other proofs, they found the biſhop's ſumner and bell-ringer guilty of it; and by the depoſition of the ſumner himſelf it appear'd, that Dr. Horſey, the biſhop of London's chancellor, and he, and the bell-ringer did murder him, and then hang him up.

At the ſame time the biſhop begun a new proceſs againſt Hunne for hereſy; of which being found guilty, he was deliver'd over to the ſecular power to be burnt, which was accordingly done in Smithfield. When judgment was given, the biſhops of Durham and Lincoln, with many doctors both of divinity and canon-law ſat with the biſhop of London; ſo that this (ſays our Author) was look'd on as an act of the whole clergy, and done by common conſent. The intent of this was to ſtifle all enquiry about the murder; for it was ſuppos'd that when once the deceas'd had been declar'd a heretick, no man would be ſo bold as to appear for him. But it fell out quite otherwiſe. The city of London was en-

raged to the greateſt degree at the cruelty of the clergy, and made it a common cauſe. That a poor fellow for ſuing a clerk according to law, ſhould be long impriſon'd, and at laſt murder'd, and the reproach of it caſt upon himſelf to defame him, and ruin his family; and then to burn the dead body that had been ſo uſed; was thought ſuch a complication of cruelties, as few Barbarians had ever been guilty of.

So that notwithſtanding the very great pains taken to ſtop the proceedings, and the endeavours of the cardinal to forbid their going on, the thing was ſo foul and evident, that they were ineffectual: and the tryal went on, and the chancellor and ſumner were indicted as principals in the murder. Hunne's children were alſo reſtor'd in parliament.

The convocation, which was now ſetting, finding all this ſtir made, reſolv'd to call Dr. Standiſh to an account; whoſe arguments in the affair before mention'd they thought greatly to have contributed in raiſing this flame. When he was firſt ſummon'd, ſome articles were objected to him by word of mouth concerning the judging of clerks in civil courts; but the next day a bill was deliver'd to him in writing, to which a day was appointed for his anſwer.

Standiſh

Standiſh finding they were determin'd to oppreſs him, begg'd the king's protection for what he had done only in diſcharge of his duty, as his counſel: but the clergy pretended to the king, that it was for ſomewhat he had ſaid in his lectures, which he had read at St. Paul's, and therefore begg'd him to maintain the rights of the church. On the other hand the temporal lords and houſe of commons addreſs'd the king to maintain the temporal juriſdiction, and protect Standiſh from the malice of his enemies. Upon this the king appointed the matter to be argued at Black-fryars, where he order'd his council ſpiritual and temporal, all the judges, and ſome of both houſes to be preſent. I ſhall not relate the arguments on both ſides here; but after the debate all the judges gave their opinion, that all thoſe of the convocation, who did award the citation againſt Standiſh, were guilty of a præmunire. The court then broke up. But at another meeting ſoon after, the king having expreſs'd his opinion in favour of Standiſh, and that he was reſolv'd to maintain the rights of the crown and temporal juriſdiction; the archbiſhop of Canterbury begg'd the matter might be ſo long reſpited, till they could get an anſwer from the court of Rome, and they would then conform themſelves to the laws of the land

land in whatever was conſiſtent with the law of God, To this the king made no anſwer then, but upon his command Standiſh was ſoon after diſmiſs'd out of the court of convocation. And the king, not willing to break off with the clergy about Hunne's affair, came to this expedient, that Dr. Horſey, who had abſconded in the arch-biſhop's houſe, tho' it was pretended he was priſoner there, ſince warrants had been out to apprehend him, ſhould render himſelf priſoner in the king's bench; where, upon his pleading not guilty, the attorney-general ſhould acknowledge it, and withdraw the indictment; the king thinking he had maintain'd his prerogative, by bringing him to the bar.

Thus ended this great affair, which tho' far from giving the people in general ſatisfaction, as they thought juſtice had not been done againſt the criminals; yet it made the pretenſions of church-men appear very weak, and gave all men ſuch a deteſtation of their conduct, as diſpos'd the publick to be well pleas'd with the alterations, that follow'd in this reign, and every attempt towards reducing their power.

It cannot be ſuppos'd, that a clergy with this diſpoſition would countenance any reformation, which at all leſſen'd their riches or power; accordingly

accordingly this, which follow'd in the preſent reign, was entirely againſt the will of the greateſt part of them. It has been juſtly obſerv'd, there was never any reformation, but the clergy was againſt. Indeed what was done in this reign was more properly a few ſteps towards a reformation, than the thing itſelf: and tho' outwardly moſt of them paid a ſubmiſſion to the king's will in the alterations then made, yet at the ſame time we find them uſing all their artifices to prevent their being carry'd on to ſuch a length, as ſhould render the breach with Rome irreparable. With thoſe views, when they had brought themſelves to own the ſupremacy, yet they ſtill endeavour'd to cheriſh in the king a regard for the moſt abſurd doctrines of the Roman church. And leſt the few ſteps, the king had taken towards a reformation, might encourage the followers of Luther to be more open in promulging their opinions, the greateſt arts were uſed to make the king diſcourage them; and therefore we find perſecution never raged with greater violence and injuſtice, than under this reforming monarch.

For the ſame reaſon, and in order to make the clergy leſs ſenſible of the abſurdity of ſeveral doctrines of the church, and of the implicit and ſervile obedience claim'd by it, they

they endeavour'd to ſuppreſs the tranſlation of the bible in this reign; for it was their maxim, to uſe the laity, as Herodotus tells us, the Scythians did their ſlaves, which was to deprive them of their eyes, that they might churn their maſter's milk with more attention.

Therefore whatever merit there was in accompliſhing the reformation, the clergy have no pretence to any part of it; and the few of them, that really and with ſincerity labour'd to bring it about, of whom biſhop Cranmer was at the head, were a very inconſiderable number in reſpect to that whole body.

And ſince I have mention'd that great man, upon whoſe character ſuch encomiums have been made, I muſt here own my opinion, that if we conſider with attention his whole conduct, we ſhall find ſome parts of it, which cannot fail very much to leſſen thoſe ideas, we are at firſt apt to conceive of him.

It is far from my intention to derogate from the merit of a man ſo much celebrated, by making no allowances for the frailties of human nature, from which it would be unreaſonable to expect, that he or any man whatever ſhould be exempt by the ſanctity of his profeſſion: and as ſuch, I am very willing to conſider his recantation in the latter part of his life; and whatever other ſlips he might have

have been guilty of, which may be allow'd to be conſequences of human frailty, are readily to be excus'd, provided they are mere frailties: but we cannot conſider in that light ſome of his actions. The proteſtation, he made at his conſecration *, when he took his oath to the Pope, was a deliberate act; and however agreeable it might have been to the maxims of canoniſts † and caſuiſts at that time, was very unſuitable to the integrity of his character.

The taking of oaths with reſerv'd meanings and particular explications, can have no other tendency than to deſtroy all faith amongſt men. And it was formerly obſervable, that the clergy in general too much countenanc'd the taking of oaths with mental reſervations; tho' in juſtice to the preſent clergy, ſurely it muſt be own'd, they never allow of any private explications in what they ſubſcribe as neceſſary to qualify them for their holy function, or on any other occaſion.

His

* *Hiſt. of the refor. vol.* 1. *p.* 129.

† *In how different a light were oaths conſider'd by the ancient heathens, when at Athens one of their greateſt tragedians brought upon himſelf the higheſt indignation of his audience, by putting into the mouth of a worthy character, a ſentiment agreeable to the behaviour of this great and pious divine.*

Ἡ γλωσσ' ὀμωμοχ', ἡ δὲ φρὴν ἀνώμοτος.

My tongue has ſworn, but not my mind.

Euripid. Hippol. l. 612.

His compliance, as well as that of the whole convocation, with the king's will, in annulling the marriage with Anne of Cleves, is extremely unjuſtifiable, and not to be excuſed by the fear of incurring the king's diſpleaſure; which, if allowed, will equally juſtify the worſt actions committed at the commands of the moſt unjuſt tyrants. The author of the hiſtory of the reformation ſays, " this * was " the greateſt piece of compliance that ever " the king had from his clergy: for as they " all knew there was nothing of weight in " that pre-contract, ſo they laid down a moſt " pernicious precedent for invalidating all pub- " lick treaties and agreements; ſince if one " of the parties being unwilling to it, ſo that " his conſent was not inward, he was not " bound by it, there was no ſafety among " men more."

And again, " for that argument, that was " taken from the want of conſummation, " they had forgotten what was pleaded on the " king's behalf ten years before, that conſent " without conſummation made a marriage " compleat.——But as the king was re- " ſolv'd on any terms to get rid of the queen, " ſo the clergy were alſo reſolv'd not to in- " cur his diſpleaſure; in which they rather " ſought

* *Vol.* 1. *p.* 281.

" ſought for reaſons to give ſome colour to " their ſentence, than paſs'd their judgment " upon the ſtrength of them."

But what alone is ſufficient to deſtroy the great veneration for Cranmer, is the treatment ſome Anabaptiſts met with in the ſucceeding reign. As that young prince Edward VI. was entirely under the direction of proteſtant biſhops, we might expect to ſee religion put on a much more amiable face, when its chief reformers were now no longer obſtructed by that great reſtraint and ſubmiſſion, to which they were ſubjected, by the imperious will of the late king. We might expect to ſee the clergy recommending the proteſtant religion by the reaſonableneſs of its doctrines, by gentleneſs, moderation, and diſintereſtedneſs in its teachers, and by the reverſe of a behaviour ſo much complain'd of in the popiſh church. But alas! we ſhall ſoon find ourſelves miſtaken in thoſe pleaſing hopes. The ſword of perſecution had only chang'd hands, and an implicit compliance with the preſent clergy, was likely to be as much claim'd, as ever it had been by the church of Rome. The young king, in whoſe diſpoſition good-nature was as prevalent as his good ſenſe, was ſhock'd at this unexpected behaviour in the proteſtant clergy; and being preſs'd to ſign a warrant

for the burning a poor frantick Anabaptiſt woman, could not at firſt be prevail'd with to do it, "but * thought it a cruelty too like that "they had condemn'd in papiſts, to burn any "for their conſciences." And when at laſt by the ſophiſtical arguments of good biſhop Cranmer, he was rather ſilenc'd in his objections, than ſatisfy'd in his compliance, "he "ſet his hand to the warrant with tears in "his eyes, ſaying to Cranmer, that if he "did wrong, ſince it was in ſubmiſſion to his "authority, he ſhould anſwer for it before "God."

It is plain from hence, that perſecution for opinions in religion was never diſliked by our clergy, and we might probably have ſeen it at as great a height in this, as in the ſucceeding reign, had it not been extremely impolitick to furniſh the vaſt number of enemies, the reformation then had in the kingdom, with the power of retorting the ſame objection againſt the proteſtant religion, that had been ſo ſucceſsfully urged againſt popery. Indeed it is pretty extraordinary, their policy ſhould ſuffer the clergy to give thoſe open proofs of their diſpoſition which they then did: but it is at the ſame time a very powerful argument of that diſpoſition, ſince neither policy, which gene-

* *Hiſt. of the refor. vol. 2. p. 112.*

generally much governs eccleſiaſticks, nor the conſideration of what they themſelves had ſo lately felt, could prevail on them entirely to ſuppreſs it, even in thoſe early days of their power. And tho' the legiſlature has wiſely thought fit to pare their talons ſince; yet in ſome later reigns, when any of our princes have thro' weakneſs or ill deſigns countenanc'd their uſurp'd power, we find it employ'd with no leſs ſeverity than formerly againſt all, that ſeem'd to diſapprove of it; and tho' they could not extend it againſt the lives of ſuch, yet they have done it to the greateſt degree againſt the liberty of their perſons, their characters, and fortunes.

The ſucceeding reign of Queen Mary, in which the church of Rome was again uppermoſt, is an inſtance of the miſeries of a ſtate govern'd by a woman, over whoſe paſſions bigotry, and a falſe zeal for religion had the whole aſcendant. She deliver'd herſelf up to her confeſſor, " and * was as much addicted " to the humours and intereſts of the clergy, " as they could wiſh." The intereſt of the ſtate was entirely neglected. Calais, which had been for ages maintain'd, and was the laſt monument of our former victories in France, acquir'd at the expence of ſo much blood

* *Burnet,*

blood and treaſure, was now loſt: and as this properly may be conſider'd as a reign of prieſts, we never find one more mean and contemptible.

The reformation, which was re-eſtabliſh'd under Q. Elizabeth, met with the ſame oppoſition from the majority of the clergy, that it had formerly. It would be foreign to the deſign of theſe few ſheets, to enter into an account of the particular ſteps taken in that affair; but it was obſervable, the clergy for the moſt part made it a maxim to give what oppoſition they could to the reformation; but as ſoon as any ſteps towards it were ſettled by parliamentary authority, they choſe to reconcile them to their conſciences notwithſtanding * the diſapprobation, they had expreſs'd, rather than quit their preferments. But tho' the reform'd religion may from this reign be ſaid to be perfectly ſettled in the kingdom, we ſhall be very much deceiv'd, if we expect to find any great amendment in its clergy. We ſhall ſoon perceive much of the old leaven ſtill remaining. The ſame purſuit of wealth, power, and independency was ſtill reſolv'd upon: but as all changes in government produce the ſame in politicks, ſo their ſchemes for the accompliſhment of their deſigns were to

* *Hiſt. of the refor.*

to be a little alter'd; and this like ſubtle politicians they did not fail to do.

It now became more neceſſary than formerly for the clergy to pay their court to temporal princes. In order thereto, we ſhall find them deviſing new doctrines pernicious to the happineſs and liberty of mankind, and from being the janizaries of the papacy, as they are aptly ſtil'd by a great author, become thoſe of arbitrary power, as we ſhall fully ſee them in the following reign. And the event has prov'd the prophecy, in a letter imputed to the famous Machiavel, but too true, where ſpeaking of the miſeries brought upon mankind, and the corruption of religion by the eccleſiaſticks, which call'd for a thorough reformation, we find theſe words: "*I would not be underſtood to diſſuade "any from honouring true apoſtolical teach- "ers, when they ſhall be eſtabliſh'd amongſt "us, and from allowing them (even of right, "and not of alms or courteſy) ſuch emolu- "ments, as may enable them chearfully to per- "form the duties of their charge, to provide "for their children, and even to uſe hoſpi- "tality, as they are commanded by St. Paul. "But this I will propheſy, that if princes "ſhall perform this buſineſs (meaning a re- "formation) by halves, and leave any root "of

* *Mach. Engliſh tran. p.* 541.

" of this clergy or prieſt-craft, as it now is
" amongſt us; or if that famous reformer fled
" ſome years ſince out of Picardy to Geneva,
" who is of ſo great renown for learning and
" parts, ſhall not in his model wholly extir-
" pate this ſort of men: then, I ſay, I muſt
" foretell, that as well the magiſtrate, as this
" workman will find themſelves deceiv'd in
" their expectation, and that the leaſt fibra of
" this plant will over-run again the whole
" vineyard of the Lord, and turn to a diffuſive
" papacy in every dioceſe, perhaps in every
" pariſh."

Whoever impartially conſiders the reign of James I. cannot but diſcover, that the arbitrary notions which that weak and ſelf-ſufficient prince had got into his head, were greatly promoted by the diſcourſes and exceſſive flattery of the clergy: and it was from thoſe principles, all the miſeries, this kingdom ſoon afterwards felt, have entirely proceeded.

The doctrine of unlimited paſſive obedience to princes is a plant purely of proteſtant growth; I mean, of proteſtant prieſt-craft: or at leaſt if it had ever a being before in the brain of any enthuſiaſtical or intereſted prieſt, the clergy of the reform'd church of England may claim the ſole honour of having cheriſh'd, and brought it to perfection.

How

How much ſoever the clergy had hitherto contributed towards the oppreſſions of the people, yet we never find they had the impudence to maintain, it was a part of religion and their duty to ſubmit to them, till theſe times, I am ſpeaking of.

The firſt uſe, they made, of this diſpoſition in K. James, was to render the puritans more obnoxious to him; towards whom already he was far from being well inclin'd, tho' he had formerly declar'd quite the contrary in Scotland. Their different opinions in regard to the hierarchy render'd them extremely odious to the biſhops, and they dreaded the growth of their opinions more than thoſe of popery itſelf, as appears by their conduct throughout this reign. The biſhops therefore repreſented the puritans as men, whoſe principles were deſtructive to monarchy no leſs, than to the government of the church by biſhops; a charge, that could not fail confirming a prince of his ſentiments in his averſion towards them.

In a conference * appointed at this time for form's ſake between the biſhops and puritan miniſters the arch-biſhop of Canterbury (a moderate man reckon'd, as times went) did not ſcruple to make uſe of an expreſſion of flattery

* *Rapin vol. 2. p. 162.*

to the king ſo high-ſtrain'd, as to be almoſt blaſphemous; for, upon the king's replying himſelf to the objections of the miniſters, he cry'd out, he very believ'd it was by the ſpirit of God, the king ſpoke what he then did.

But it was not by words alone, that the biſhops flatter'd the king, and ſhew'd their approbation of his arbitrary principles. Arch-biſhop Bancroft, like a true high-flying church-man, was reſolved to lead the way in an attempt to make the laws depend on the ſole will of the king. He * therefore in the name of all the clergy exhibited to the king in council articles containing twenty five pretended grievances, which he deſired might be reform'd in granting prohibitions from the civil courts. The arch-biſhop could not but know, that in ſuch caſes the judges acted according to the fix'd laws of the land; and that if there was any hardſhip in their proceedings, they could not be reform'd but by authority of parliament. But the arch-biſhop's drift in this conduct was to point out a method to others of applying immediately to the king, without regarding the parliament, in things, that were undeniably within their juriſdiction; which opportunity, he imagin'd, king James would readily have embrac'd, by which

* *See Coke's articuli cleri, 2d Inſt.*

which alſo the clergy would have gain'd a point, they could not have expected from the juſtice and wiſdom of the whole legiſlature. It is not improbable but the king might have been gain'd to their cauſe, had it not been for the unanimous and ſtrenuous oppoſition of the judges, who repreſented the illegality of the arch-biſhop's requeſt, and the dangerous conſequences, that might happen from it.

Soon afterwards two books were publickly licenſed; the one wrote by Dr. Cowel, profeſſor of civil law at Cambridge, and vicar-general to arch-biſhop Bancroft; the other by one Dr. Blackwood, a clergyman, in which were paſſages in favour of the moſt extravagant maxims of arbitrary * power. The firſt laid down theſe three principles.

1ſt, That the king was not bound by laws, or his coronation-oath.

2dly, That the king was not obliged to call a parliament to make laws, but might do it alone by his abſolute power.

3dly, That it was a great favour to admit the conſent of the ſubjects in giving ſubſidies.

Theſe principles were ſo groſs, that even the king found himſelf obliged to forbid the reading thoſe books, by proclamation, in order

* *Rapin vol. 2. p. 176.*

to prevent the juſtice of parliament upon the authors.

The ſucceſſor of the arch-biſhop juſt mention'd indeed prov'd a man of more moderation in his principles, than is uſually met with in church-men: but as ſuch a temper made him unfit for promoting the deſigns of his brethren, we find him always hated and branded by them. He could not approve of the rigour uſed to diſſenting proteſtants at the ſame time, that the Roman catholicks were openly tolerated by the king, and wink'd at by the clergy contrary to the declared laws of the realm: his * letter to the king on this occaſion, and the freedom, he uſes, in condemning the diſpenſing by proclamation with the eſtabliſh'd laws, will ever redound to his honour; notwithſtanding the perſecution and ill uſage, he met with from his brethren, who ſtrove to repreſent him as a puritan; a name at this time indiſcriminately made uſe of, not only towards the preſbyterians, but likewiſe towards all ſuch, who did not approve of the notions countenanc'd by the king, and propagated by the clergy, nay even towards thoſe, who expreſs'd any diſlike of the libertiniſm, or faſhionable vices of the age.

As the fruit of the ſeeds ſown in this reign came to their full maturity in the following

* *Ruſhw. vol.* 1. *p.* 85.

one,

one, I will dwell no longer on this than juſt to obſerve, that if the reader pleaſes to ſee a ſpecimen of true prieſtly panegyrick carry'd on to the moſt ridiculous and fulſome extravagance, he may meet with it in an extract of the ſermon preach'd at king James's funeral, printed in * Ruſhworth.

Under Charles I. the ſpirit of our churchmen diſplay'd itſelf without reſerve in its moſt lively colours, and ſtript of all diſguiſe whatſoever. By their means England was on the brink of being enſlaved by the king, and clergy at the ſame time. The views, the church had, manifeſtly appear'd as early as the coronation of the king. The form of that ceremony was compiled chiefly by biſhop Laud, who officiated as dean of Weſtminſter in the room of biſhop Williams lately fallen into diſpleaſure, and therefore ſuſpended from that office. I will not trouble the reader with ſeveral ſuperſtitious innovations introduc'd into the ceremony, which could not but give offence; but will ſet down one paſſage, which ſufficiently ſhews the ſchemes, the church had form'd.

After the coronation was perform'd, and the king conducted by the nobility to the throne, this remarkable, and unprecedented paſſage was read to him.

* *Vol.* 1. *p.* 160. " Stand

" Stand * and hold faſt from henceforth the " place, to which you have been heir by the " ſucceſſion of your fore-fathers, being now " deliver'd to you by authority of almighty " God, and by the hands of us, and all the " biſhops and ſervants of God: and as you " ſee the clergy to come nearer the altar than " others, ſo remember that (in all places con- " venient) you give them greater honour, " that the mediator between God and man " may eſtabliſh you in the kingly throne to " be a mediator betwixt the clergy and laity, " and that you may reign for ever with Jeſus " Chriſt, the king of kings, and lord of " lords."

As the drift of this ſpeech is obivous to every one, who reads it, I ſhall only obſerve what a proſpect there was of the clergy's extending their power to the height of their wiſhes, whenever they ſhould have a prelate at their head (which ſoon after happen'd) that aſſerted their ſuperiority on ſo publick, and ſolemn an occaſion.

Since Laud afterwards made ſo conſiderable a figure in this reign, eſpecially in the direction of all eccleſiaſtical affairs, it may not be improper to mention the account given of him, and his firſt appearance in the world in the

* *Ruſhw. vol.* 1. *p.* 200.

the late reign by arch-biſhop Abbot his prede-ceſſor.

" This man (ſays * he) is the only inward " counſellor with Buckingham, ſitting with " him ſometimes whole hours, and feeding " his humour with malice and ſpight.

" His life in Oxford was to pick quarrels " in the lectures of the publick readers, and " to advertiſe them to the then biſhop of " Durham, that he might fill the ears of K. " James with diſcontent againſt the honeſt " men, that took pains in their places, and " ſettled the truth, (which he call'd puri-" taniſm) in their auditors.

" He made it his work to ſee what books " were in the preſs, and to look over epiſtles " dedicatory, and prefaces to the reader, to " ſee what faults might be found in them.

" It was an obſervation, what a ſweet man " this was like to be, that the firſt obſervable " act, that he did, was the marrying the earl " of D. to the lady R. when it was notorious " to the world, ſhe had another huſband, the " ſame a nobleman, who had divers children " then living by her."

We ſhall ſoon ſee the clergy did not fail proſecuting their deſigns with vigour, of which they had made ſo early a diſcovery. The univer-

* *Ruſhw. vol.* I. *p.* 440.

univerſity of Cambridge in the beginning of this reign, in order to make their court to his majeſty, took a publick occaſion to offer a notorious affront to the repreſentative body of the whole people, the commons in parliament, by chuſing the duke of Buckingham, at that time under an impeachment, for their chancellor. Accordingly we find the commons entertain'd the higheſt ſenſe of this indignity offer'd them, as appears in their anſwer to a meſſage of the king's * on this occaſion: tho' his majeſty's eſpouſing the part of the univerſity prevented their proceeding in a manner, they were otherwiſe inclin'd to do.

This parliament was no ſooner diſſolv'd, which happen'd in a ſhort time, and the king determin'd to furniſh himſelf with money by loan, and other illegal and oppreſſive methods, but the pulpits ſounded with the doctrine of paſſive obedience, and compliance with the king's commands without any examination of their lawfulneſs. Parliaments were now ſaid to be only uſurpations upon the unlimited power of ſacred majeſty, which alone was ſufficient to impoſe laws or taxes on the ſubject by its own authority. Amongſt the ſeveral diſcourſes on that head, thoſe of Dr. Sibthorp and Dr. Manwaring were particularly remarkable.

* *Ruſhw. vol.* 1. *p.* 373.

remarkable. The one preach'd at the lent-aſſizes at Northampton, a ſermon entitled apoſtolical obedience; in which he ſet forth, " that * the prince who is head, and makes " his court and council, it is his duty to di- " rect and make laws, Eccleſ. viii. 3. he doth " whatſoever pleaſes him. Where the word " of a king is, there is power, and who may " ſay unto him, what doeſt thou? ——

" If princes command any thing, which " ſubjects may not perform, becauſe it is a- " gainſt the laws of God, or of nature, or im- " poſſible; yet ſubjects are bound to undergo " the puniſhment without reſiſtance, railing, " or reviling, and ſo yield a paſſive obedience, " where they cannot exhibit an active one.

" I know no other caſe, but one of thoſe " three, wherein a ſubject may excuſe himſelf " with paſſive obedience, but in all other he " is bound to active obedience.

Dr. Manwaring promoted the ſame buſineſs in two ſermons preach'd before the king at Whitehall, where he deliver'd for doctrine to this purpoſe, " that the king is not bound to " obſerve the laws of the realm concerning " the ſubjects rights and liberties, but that his " royal will and command in impoſing loans " and taxes without common conſent in par-

 " liament

* *Ruſh. vol.* 1. *p.* 423.

" liament doth oblige the ſubject's conſcience
" on pain of eternal damnation.

" That thoſe, who refus'd to pay this loan,
" offended againſt the law of God, and the
" king's ſupreme authority, and became guilty
" of impiety, diſloyalty, and rebellion. And
" that the authority of parliament is not ne-
" ceſſary for the raiſing of aids and ſubſidies,
" and that the ſlow proceedings of ſuch great
" aſſemblies were not fitted for the ſupply of
" the ſtate's urgent neceſſities, but would ra-
" ther produce ſundry impediments to the
" juſt deſigns of princes."

For refuſing to licenſe the firſt of theſe ſermons that arch-biſhop Abbot was ſuſpended. The ſermon was afterwards licens'd by the biſhop of London. As for the preachers themſelves, they were ſoon rewarded with conſiderable benefices, and Manwaring was even promoted to a biſhoprick, tho' he had been ſentenc'd by the houſe of lords to pay a large fine, to make a publick ſubmiſſion, and declar'd incapable of holding any dignity.

It was not diſcourſes of this kind only, that were publickly preach'd, and afterwards encourag'd and licens'd by the biſhops; but we find by a petition of the bookſellers and printers to the * parliament in the fourth year of this reign, that books wrote againſt

* *Ruſhw. vol.* 1. *p.* 655.

againſt the fundamentals of the reform'd religion, and in favour of popery were licens'd by Laud, at this time advanc'd to the ſee of London; while books wrote in defence of the eſtabliſh'd religion were reſtrain'd, and of theſe ſeveral inſtances were produced.

Every one, who is at all vers'd in the hiſtory of theſe times, cannot but have obſerv'd, that in order to carry church-power as high as poſſible, the biſhops then affected to make the religion of this country approach as near popery, as they could, without actually declaring for it, or allowing the Pope's ſupremacy. As biſhop Laud was the chief promoter of the independent power, they were ſtriving for, and had himſelf the direction of all eccleſiaſtical affairs, it would not have been for his intereſt to have eſtabliſh'd any other ſupremacy, eſpecially after he became arch-biſhop of Canterbury; for he then was in a manner himſelf Pope, and even affected to be call'd his holineſs, and moſt holy father, as he was ſtil'd by the univerſity of Oxford * in many of their letters and addreſſes.

Beſides the licenſing of the books, which I have taken notice of, the many ſuperſtitious innovations introduc'd at that time into divine ſervice are notable proofs of the af-

* *Heylin's life of Laud, p.* 297.

ſectation of popery, the clergy then diſcover'd; of which the conſecration of St. Catherine's church is a very remarkable inſtance. The reader may ſee the full account of it in Ruſhworth or Rapin. The leaſt oppoſition to any of theſe things was an unpardonable crime; which we ſee by the proceſs form'd againſt Henry Sherfield, recorder of Sarum, for only removing by conſent of the veſtry ſome pieces of glaſs from the church-window, in which there was a ridiculous repreſentation of God painted in the form of an old man, with a pair of compaſſes: for which high offence the poor * man was fin'd, committed to the fleet, and remov'd from his recorderſhip, and bound to his good behaviour.

The biſhops were become ſo intoxicated with their darling ſcheme of church-power, which they did not doubt to accompliſh, that they ſet up for inquiſitors in their ſeveral dioceſes, by obliging the church-wardens to turn informers concerning the lives and actions of their pariſhioners, to which the biſhop of Wincheſter oblig'd them by oath † in his primary viſitation, and thereby committed an outrage on the laws of the land, and juriſdiction of parliament, which alone has power to preſcribe oaths to the ſubjects.

Nor

* *Ruſhw. vol.* 1. *p.* 153. † *Ibid. vol.* 2. *p.* 186.

Nor can theſe attempts of the clergy in this reign be ſaid to be only the actions of particular men, and therefore not chargeable upon the whole; the contrary to this appears in that, after the parliament of 1640 was diſſolv'd, the convocation, in which the whole clergy were repreſented, continued to ſit notwithſtanding, contrary to the uſual method; and by their own authority took upon them to make canons, and enjoin an oath, which all graduates and clergymen in the univerſities ſhould be obliged to take; they alſo granted the king a ſubſidy, a moſt publick and avow'd encroachment on the juriſdiction of parliament.

Theſe proceedings were ſo notorious, that my lord Clarendon cannot help condemning them, tho' he does it with his uſual tenderneſs for the cauſe, in which he wrote. " * The " convocation (ſays he) the regular and legal " aſſembly of the clergy, cuſtomarily begin- " ning and ending with parliaments, was af- " ter the determination of the laſt, by a new " writ continued, and ſat for the ſpace of " above a month under the proper title of a " ſynod: made canons, which it was thought " it might do, and gave ſubſidies out of par- " liament, and enjoin'd oaths, which certainly " it

* *Vol.* 1. *p.* 116.

" it might not do. In a word, did many " things, which in the beſt of times might " have been queſtion'd, and were ſure to be " condemn'd in the worſt." But as impudent as this conduct ſeems to be, it was not at all ſurprizing, ſince the biſhops had ſome time before not ſcrupled publickly to declare their independency on the ſtate in defiance of the laws of the land, and the principles, thereby eſtabliſh'd at the reformation, and in violation of their oath of ſupremacy. And this was done, as Whitlock informs us, in the high-commiſſion court, at the time that Baſtwick appear'd there, and was ſo ſeverely puniſh'd for writing a book in anſwer to one Short, a papiſt, who had maintain'd the Pope's ſupremacy. The author juſt mention'd relates it thus: " * In the cenſure of Baſtwick all the " biſhops then preſent deny'd openly, that " they had their juriſdiction, as biſhops, from " the king, for which they might have been " cenſured themſelves in king Henry II. and " king Edward III's times.

" But they affirm'd that they had their ju- " riſdicton from God alone; which denial of " the ſupremacy of the king under God, king " Henry VIII. would have taken very ill, and " it may be, would have corrected them by " his

* *Whitl. Mem. p.* 22.

" his kingly arguments, and regia manu. But " theſe biſhops publickly diſavow'd their de- " pendance on the king. And the arch-biſhop " maintain'd the book of Chowney (who had " wrote a book at this time in defence of the " church of Rome,) and that the Romiſh " church was a true church, and err'd not in " fundamentals."

The court of high-commiſſion was now become an unſupportable grievance to the ſubject, not only by a tyrannical exerciſe of power in eccleſiaſtical affairs, but by aſſuming to itſelf an univerſal juriſdiction, by tramp- ling on the laws and the rights of all the civil courts; ſo that the ſubject deprived of his refuge, had no ſhelter to fly to from injuſtice and oppreſſion: and for this I chuſe to quote lord Clarendon's own words, as I am certain, he cannot be thought to have miſrepreſented the matter in diſfavour of the clergy. " * Of " late (ſpeaking of the high-commiſſion court) " it cannot be denied, that by the great " power of ſome biſhops at court, it had " much over-flow'd the banks, which ſhould " have contain'd it; not only in meddling with " things that in truth were not within its con- " nuſance, but extending their ſentences and " judgments in matters tryable before them " beyond

* *Vol.* I. *p.* 221.

" beyond that degree, that was juſtifiable; and
" grew to have ſo great a contempt of the
" common law, and profeſſors of it (which
" was a fatal unkilfulneſs in the biſhops, who
" could never have ſuffer'd whilſt the com-
" mon law had been preſerv'd) that prohibi-
" tions from the ſupreme court, which have,
" and muſt have the ſuper-intendancy over
" all inferiour courts, were not only neglect-
" ed, but the judges reprehended for granting
" them (which without perjury they could
" not deny) and the lawyers diſcountenanc'd
" for moving them (which they were ob-
" liged in duty to do) ſo that thereby the
" clergy made almoſt a whole profeſſion, if
" not their enemies, yet very undevoted to
" them."

" Then it was grown from an eccleſiaſtical
" court for the reformation of manners, to a
" court of revenue, and impoſed great fines
" upon thoſe, who were culpable before them,
" ſometimes above the degree of the offence,
" had the juriſdicton of fining been unqueſ-
" tionable, which it was not. Which courſe of
" fining was much more frequent, and the
" fines heavier, after the king had granted all
" that revenue (whatſoever it ſhould prove to
" be) to be employ'd for the reparation of St.
" Paul's church; which tho' it were a glo-

" rious

" rious work, and worthy the piety of thoſe,
" that advanc'd it; and the greatneſs of his
" mind, who principally intended it, made the
" grievance the heavier."

In another place the ſame noble hiſtorian ſpeaking of the animoſities between the lawyers and churchmen, attributes the hatred on the part of the latter to their opinion, that their not enjoying ſo many of the great poſts in the civil government as formerly, was owing to the oppoſition of the lawyers. A true inſtance of the ambition of prieſts, which rather than not gratify, they were ready to deſtroy the laws themſelves. " It * cannot
" be deny'd (ſays lord Clarendon) that the
" peeviſh ſpirits of ſome clergymen have ta-
" ken great pains to alienate that profeſſion
" (meaning the lawyers) from them: and
" others as unſkilfully (finding that in former
" times, when the religion of the ſtate was a
" vital part of its policy, many churchmen were
" employ'd eminently in the civil government
" of the kingdom) imputed their wanting
" thoſe ornaments, their predeceſſors wore, to
" the power and prevalency of the lawyers,
" of whom ſome principal men in all times,
" they could not but obſerve to have been
" their avow'd enemies: and ſo believ'd the

* *Vol.* 1. *p.* 241.

" ſtraitning and confining the profeſſion of
" the common law muſt naturally extend and
" enlarge the juriſdiction of the church.
" Thence aroſe their bold and unwarrantable
" oppoſing, and proteſting againſt prohibitions
" and other proceedings at law, on the behalf
" of the eccleſiaſtical courts; and the procu-
" ring ſome orders and privileges from the
" king on behalf of the civil law, as the arch-
" biſhop of Canterbury prevail'd with the king
" to direct, that half the maſters of chancery
" ſhould be always civil lawyers, and to de-
" clare, that no others of what condition
" whatſoever ſhould ſerve him as maſters of
" requeſt."

It is well known, that arch-biſhop Laud, the principal promoter of all the doctrines advanc'd in this reign, and of the grievances, which flow'd from them, is even at this day the darling of the clergy, and look'd upon as the champion of their rights, and a martyr for the cauſe of religion. The greateſt encomiums have been beſtow'd on his memory. And my lord Clarendon in his hiſtory ſets him forth, as a man of the higheſt probity, learning, and ſenſe, and ſeems willing to attribute no other fault to him than a little haſtineſs in his temper for accompliſhing his deſigns, occaſion'd by the fervency of his zeal for promoting

moting the cauſe of religion, and glory of his prince. But in forming a juſt idea of his character we need be determin'd by nothing but the ſhare, he had, in the tranſactions of thoſe times; and I will venture to affirm, that my lord Clarendon himſelf does in ſome particular paſſages ſay enough of Laud to prove, he was far from deſerving that amiable and good character, he ſeems ſtudious to make his reader entertain of him. Whoever reads an hiſtorian in the proper manner, that is, with a view of ſearching out truth, muſt form his judgment of things from the matters of fact ſet down, and not be ſo led away by what the author ſays concerning them, and his reflections upon them, as blindly to adopt his ſentiments and opinions. And I am confident, that to any reader, who will attend without prejudice to the words of that noble hiſtorian juſt mention'd, Laud muſt appear of a weak and over-bearing temper, apt to be tranſported with the higheſt and moſt indecent paſſion at mere trifles, unforgiving towards thoſe, who had formerly offended him, conſtantly introducing innovations in order to eſtabliſh an independent power in the church, and not ſcrupulous of uſing any methods to increaſe the king's revenues under pretence of promoting the ſervice of his ſovereign. The firſt,

and laſt particulars of this charge are ſo very obvious, that I cannot help ſetting down both paſſages relating to them at length. " * The " ſharpneſs of his language and expreſſions " was ſo natural to him, that he could not " debate any thing without commotion, when " the argument was not of moment, nor bear " contradiction in debate even in council, " where all men are equally free, with that " patience and temper, that was neceſſary; of " which they, who wiſh'd him not well, would " take advantage, and would therefore con- " tradict him, that he might be tranſported " with ſome indecent paſſion: which upon a " ſhort recollection he was always ſorry for, " and moſt readily and heartily would make " acknowledgment."

As to the laſt particular, his conduct, when in the management of the treaſury upon the death of lord Portland is related thus: " Be- " ing † obliged to it now by his truſt, he en- " ter'd upon it with his natural earneſtneſs " and warmth, making it his principal care " to advance and improve the king's revenue " by all the ways, which were offer'd, and ſo " hearken'd to all informations and propoſi- " tions of that kind; and having not had " experience of that kind of people, who " deal

* *Vol.* 1. *p.* 77. † *Ibid. p.* 75.

" deal in that traffick, (a confident, ſenſeleſs,
" and, for the moſt part, a naughty people)
" he was ſometimes miſled by them to think
" better of ſome projects, than they deſerv'd:
" but then he was ſo entirely devoted, to what
" would be beneficial to the king, that all
" propoſitions and deſigns, which were for
" the profit (only or principally) of particular
" perſons, how great ſoever, were oppoſed,
" and ſtifled in their birth by his power and
" authority; which created him enemies e-
" nough in the court, and many of ability
" to do miſchief, who knew well how to
" recompenſe diſcourteſies, which they al-
" ways call'd injuries.

" The revenue of too many of the court
" conſiſted principally in incloſures, and im-
" provements of that nature, which he ſtill
" oppoſed paſſionately, except they were
" founded upon law; and then if it would
" bring profit to the king, how old and obſolete
" ſoever the law was, he thought he might
" juſtly adviſe the proſecution: and ſo he did
" a little too much countenance the commiſ-
" ſion concerning depopulation, which brought
" much charge and trouble upon the people,
" and was likewiſe caſt upon his account."

We have a remarkable inſtance in this reign, how excellent caſuiſts the clergy are, and what

what a notable knack they have of diſtinguiſhing in caſes of conſcience ſuitably to the ſhape and conveniency of the times. When king Charles, being preſs'd to paſs the bill for attainting the earl of Strafford, diſcover'd great unwillingneſs to give his conſent to what, he ſaid, his conſcience told him was ſo unjuſt; he was deſir'd by his council to confer with his biſhops on that point. Accordingly " * the " arch-biſhop of York, who was at hand to " his argument of conſcience, told him there " was a publick, and a private conſcience: " that his publick conſcience, as a king, might " not only diſpenſe with, but oblige him to " do that, which was againſt his private con- " ſcience, as a man."

Were I to give a full account, and all the particular inſtances of the miſchievous conduct and behaviour of the clergy in theſe times, it would be taking upon me to write a hiſtory of the reign, which is very foreign from my deſign: for in ſhort, all the troubles in this reign are in the greateſt meaſure to be ſet down to their account. All the innovations in church and ſtate, all the attempts to erect an independency in the firſt, and a tyranny in the latter, were countenanc'd by their doctrine, and promoted by their actions. And in this I am confirm'd by the

* *Clarend. hiſt. of reb. vol.* 1. *p.* 202.

the teſtimony of a great man, whoſe authority in this point cannot be queſtion'd, ſince his zeal for the eſtabliſh'd church, and his attachment to his prince were ſo great, that he loſt his life in their defence. This is the lord Falkland, with part of whoſe ſpeech in the houſe of commons upon the bill for the excluſion of the biſhops from the houſe of lords, I ſhall conclude my account of this reign.

" Mr. * Speaker, he is a great ſtranger in " Iſrael, who knows not, that this kingdom " hath long labour'd under many and great " oppreſſions both in religion and liberty; " and his acquaintance here is not great, or his " ingenuity leſs, who does not know and ac- " knowledge, that a great, if not a principal " cauſe of both theſe hath been ſome biſhops, " and their adherents.

" Mr. Speaker, a little ſearch will ſerve to " find them to have been the deſtruction of " unity under the pretence of uniformity, to " have brought in ſuperſtition and ſcandal " under the titles of reverence and decency, " to have defiled our church by adorning our " churches, to have ſlacken'd the ſtrictneſs of " that union, which was formerly betwixt us " and

* *Ruſhw. vol.* 4. *p.* 184.

" and thoſe of our religion beyond the ſea, an
" action as impolitick as ungodly.

" As Sir Thomas More ſays of the caſuiſts,
" their buſineſs was not to keep men from
" ſinning, but to inform them, quam prope ad
" peccatum ſine peccato liceat accedere: ſo it
" ſeem'd their work was to try, how much of
" a papiſt might be brought in without po-
" pery, and to deſtroy as much as they could
" of the goſpel, without bringing themſelves
" in danger of being deſtroy'd by law.

" Mr. Speaker, to go yet further, ſome of
" them have ſo induſtriouſly labour'd to de-
" duce themſelves from Rome, that they have
" given great ſuſpicion, that in gratitude they
" deſire to return thither, or at leaſt to meet
" it half way. Some have evidently labour'd
" to bring in an Engliſh, tho' not a Roman
" popery; I mean not the outſide of it only,
" and dreſs of it, but equally abſolute, a blind
" obedience of the people upon the clergy,
" and of the clergy upon themſelves; and have
" oppoſed papacy beyond the ſea, that they
" might ſettle one beyond the water: nay
" common fame is more than ordinarily falſe,
" if none of them have found a way to recon-
" cile the opinions of Rome to the prefer-
" ments of England, and to be abſolutely, di-
" rectly, and cordially papiſts, that is all, 1500l.

" per annum, can do, to keep them from con-
" feſſing it."

I would not be underſtood from any thing I have ſaid of the proteſtant clergy to inſinuate, that their conduct had any neceſſary connection with the principles of our eſtabliſh'd religion: but my deſign is only to ſhew the ill conſequence of throwing ſo great a ſhare of power and property into the hands of any ſet of men, as ſhall naturally occaſion them to have a diſtinct intereſt from that of the community. And therefore I muſt obſerve, the preſbyterian miniſters diſcover'd no leſs fondneſs for power than thoſe of the church of England, nor leſs inclination to oppreſs all, who thought differently from them, during that ſhort time, in which they vainly imagin'd every thing was to be carry'd on according to thoſe whimſies, they had form'd in their heads.

It is ſurprizing to conſider how little effect the conſideration of the miſeries, this kingdom ſo lately felt, had upon the minds of the clergy after the reſtoration of Charles II. It was to be expected, they would have ſhun'd with horror thoſe ſteps, which had been found by experience to have expoſed their country to ruin, and have bluſh'd at the bare mention of thoſe doctrines, by which they themſelves had been ſo eminently acceſſory thereto.

But compaſſion for the ſufferings of their country, and a regard for the reſt of their fellow-ſubjects weigh'd very little with them, when put in the ballance with the hopes of preferment under a new king, and an irreconcileable hatred to the preſbyterians. They fell into all the maxims and deſigns of an abandon'd, licentious and corrupt court, and extoll'd the juſtneſs and wiſdom of its meaſures.

Nor did they ſhew any greater regard for the religious than civil rights of the kingdom, tho' the diſpoſition of thoſe, who were neareſt the king claim'd, no ſmall circumſpection from them * in that point. And tho' they could not but be ſenſible of the dangers, which ſo evidently threatned religion from a popiſh ſucceſſor, yet they were the moſt violent exclaimers againſt the bill of excluſion †; and when it came into the houſe of lords, moſt of the biſhops preſent, if not all, voted againſt it: and with ſuch zeal did they run into the humour of the court at that time, that it was obſerv'd, they fully verified the proverb in the goſpel, "where the carcaſe is, the eagles will be gathered together."

Nor was this zeal of the clergy for the deſigns of the court the over-flowings only of an incontinent joy at the king's reſtoration, which

* *Rapin.* † *Burnet, p.* 482.

which might have engaged their whole attention in ſuch a manner, as to prevent ſo early a diſcernment of the wrong meaſures then taken; but when the maſk was quite thrown off, and the king, having quarrell'd with his laſt parliament, diſcover'd his reſolution never to be cramp'd with one for the future, " * the " clergy particularly diſtinguiſh'd themſelves " by ſhewing their attachment to the prin- " ciples and maxims of the court, and ſeem'd " to make it their buſineſs to ſurrender to " the king all the liberties and privileges of " the ſubjects, and to leave them only an un- " limited obedience. According to the prin- " ciples publickly preach'd no eaſtern mo- " narch was more abſolute than the king of " England." The conduct of the late parliaments was arraign'd, as ſeditious and treaſonable: and, at the arch-biſhop of Canterbury's own † motion, the clergy were made the heralds for publiſhing the reaſons, the king in his declaration pretended he had, for diſſolving the parliament, which was to be read in all the churches throughout England.

It is ſtrange, how prevalent the moſt abſurd and deſtructive opinions are over the minds of good and wiſe men, when progagated as the general ſentiments of that body,

* *Rapin vol. 2. p. 725.* † *Burnet, p. 500.*

of which they are members. And of this we have an extraordinary inſtance in a great man, whoſe name I cannot mention on this occaſion without reluctance: I mean, the famous arch-biſhop Tillotſon, who from his letter to my lord Ruſſel, when under condemnation in Newgate, the latter end of this reign, appears to have held the doctrine of unlimited paſſive obedience, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the words; tho' afterwards experience of the fatal conſequences, that flow'd from ſuch doctrine, it is to be preſumed, made him act upon principles very different from thoſe, into which he had been before miſled; and no one appear'd a more ſtrenuous well-wiſher to the revolution, that follow'd in the next reign.

Since then the prevalency of general opinions may have that force in miſleading more diſcerning and maturer judgments, with what deteſtation muſt we look on the behaviour of thoſe, who having the education of a great part of the youth of the nation, and thoſe too of higheſt diſtinction, committed to their care, ſhould, in order to recommend themſelves to a prince, endeavour to corrupt the raw and uninform'd minds of ſuch youth with the moſt ungenerous and ſlaviſh doctrines? This was what the univerſity of Oxford did; who,

not

not content with * giving the king a manifeſt proof, by a ſolemn decree, of their own mean and proſtitute compliance with all his deſigns, whatſoever they ſhould be; infamouſly order'd, by the ſame decree, all tutors to inſtruct thoſe under their care in the ſame ſervile notions, they themſelves had therein expreſs'd. What treatment did not theſe betrayers of the moſt important charge, their country could intruſt them with, deſerve from it? Who, inſtead of forming the minds of their pupils, by an early acquaintance with the celebrated authors of antiquity, to an imitation of Greek and Roman virtues, and of animating them by the nobleſt examples with the love of virtue, freedom, and their country; who, inſtead of fortifying their minds with a generous courage, and contempt of death, if ever the publick ſervice ſhould require it, taught them to become ſubmiſſive ſlaves

* *Among ſt other doctrines, theſe following were condemn'd as damnable, and deſtructive to all ſociety; viz.*

All civil authority is derived originally from the people.

There is a mutual compact, tacit or expreſs, between a prince and his ſubjects; and that if he perform not his duty, they are diſcharg'd from theirs.

That if governours become tyrants, or govern otherwiſe, than by the laws of God and man they ought to do, they forfeit the right they had unto their government.

There lies no obligation on chriſtians to paſſive obedience; and the primitive chriſtians choſe rather to die than reſiſt, becauſe chriſtianity was not ſettled by the laws of the empire.

Vide Rapin, vol. 2. p. 730.

ſlaves of oppreſſion, fit only to execute the will and commands of tyrants.

After the death of Charles II. the duke of York ſucceeded to the crown with the general appearance of approbation and joy in the clergy, tho' the principles of his religion had been ſufficiently known; and there was great reaſon to believe, that the wrong ſteps, and violent meaſures taken in the latter end of his brother's reign, were greatly puſh'd forward by the natural earneſtneſs of the duke's temper and councils. Theſe conſiderations, one would have thought, ſhould have more particularly obliged the clergy to the greateſt circumſpection and caution in all, they ſaid or did, to avoid giving the leaſt countenance to any opinions, which they were ſenſible muſt hurry a prince of James's complexion of mind more precipitately into ſuch deſigns, as his religious, and other principles of courſe inclin'd him to; and in which they could not but diſcern, he would have no other check than the appearance of difficulty and oppoſition, he might meet with in the accompliſhment of them.

But ſo far were they from uſing any precaution of this kind, that after king James came to the crown, unlimited obedience was trumpeted, if poſſible, with more induſtry than

than ever in the pulpit, and all other places. And how neceſſary, and inſeparable a part they thought it of the chriſtian religion, as eſtabliſh'd here, is manifeſt from the inſulting importunity (for ſurely it can be call'd no other) with which the unfortunate * duke of Monmouth was preſs'd to acknowledge it on the ſcaffold by thoſe appointed to attend him, who were the biſhops of Ely, and of Bath and Wells, together with Dr. Teniſon and Dr. Hooper. Nay, ſo careful were ſome of the clergy, that the regal power ſhould not ſeem liable to any reſtraints or limitations, that leſt the king's own gracious promiſes, which he had made at his coming to the crown, might be thought to bind him down to the performance of them, Dr. Cartwright, afterwards biſhop of Cheſter †, aſſerted in a ſermon, " that the king's promiſes were free donatives, " and ought not to be too ſtrictly examin'd or " urged, and that they muſt leave his majeſty " to explain his own meaning in them."

After a view of ſuch principles and conduct hitherto, it may ſeem ſomething ſtrange to find on a ſudden, that the career of this king's illegal proceedings, met with one of the firſt ſtops from ſome of the clergy; this was in their refuſal to read the king's declaration for liberty

* *See Dr. Sachev. tryal, p.* 169. † *Rapin, vol.* 2. *p.* 754.

liberty of conſcience, on account of which, ſeven of the biſhops were committed to the Tower. But in this non-compliance with the court (unuſual as it was) they ſwerv'd not from their uſual maxims of poliey. They plainly now begun to ſee, that their own intereſt, and the deſigns of the king were no longer compatible. A Roman, not an Engliſh, popery, as in Charles I's time, was now to be eſtabliſh'd here. The affair of Magdalen-college in Oxford had open'd their eyes to a ſenſe of the danger, they run, in being further tools to his deſigns, and that they were likely to hold their eccleſiaſtical poſſeſſions by the uncertain tenure of the king's will. In ſuch a caſe it was impoſſible not to foreſee, that their preferments would be ſoon given from them to ſuch men, who having had their education in the church of Rome, would be more relied on by a bigotted king, and who indeed would be more proper to execute the work, he was in ſuch a hurry to accompliſh, than an Engliſh clergy, who if they could be diſpos'd to embrace his religon, yet could with a very ill grace and ſucceſs be ſuppos'd to propagate it amongſt the people. What was then to be expected, but to ſee large bands of foreign eccleſiaſticks pouring in upon the nation, as in the times of Henry III, and the plentiful harveſt

eſt, which the king flatter'd himſelf was now
pe, gather'd in by the hands of French and
alian prieſts? Was it not therefore the cauſe
f the church alone, not that of publick li-
erty, nor a regard for the intereſt of the peo-
le, that wrought this ſudden alteration in the
ergy? The attempts upon civil liberty had
main'd uncenſured, and unoppos'd, nay were
nforc'd by them on pain of damnation; and
one of theſe very biſhops had ſcrupled, or
hought it even indecent to publiſh in their
ulpits the late king's abuſive declaration a-
ainſt the conduct of his parliament, inſomuch
hat this ſame arch-biſhop, who was now one
f the ſeven, was the perſon, that propos'd it
council, as has been mention'd above. So
ſed had king James been to hear an abſolute
bedience to his commands preach'd up by the
ergy, and to meet with a full compliance
ith them in other matters, that on this op-
oſition he very naturally ſaid, "I * did not
expect this from the church of England,
eſpecially from ſome of you."

Behold now the clergy all at once running
ounter to thoſe doctrines of their own broach-
g, which they had with ſo much vehemence
aintain'd, and becoming guilty of what
ey themſelves had ſo very lately denounc'd

O the

* *Rapin, vol. 2. p. 763.*

the heavieſt cenſures and damnations againſt both in their particular ſermons and diſcourſes, and in their more ſolemn and publick decrees! This is their ſo much boaſted ſtand for the liberty of the people! This, their ever-memorable conduct!

When ſoon afterwards the nation was under a neceſſity of calling in the prince of Orange for the preſervation of their rights, tho' the clergy thought proper to ſwim with the ſtream, yet we ſee how awkwardly moſt of thoſe ſhifting motley politicians came into, what they were conſcious was entirely contradictory to thoſe maxims they had ſo avowedly inculcated: nor had king William been long on the throne, before a diſappointment in thoſe preferments, many of them expected, or a relapſe into thoſe doctrines, over which they could no longer bear to wear the maſk, made them return, like the dog to the vomit; giving great reaſon to ſuſpect, that too many amongſt them would gladly have ſeen the nation again expoſed to its former perils by a reſtoration, with the aggravation of having taken the oaths of allegiance to king William, and abjuration of James.

With this remarkable period in our hiſtory I ſhall cloſe the preſent account, as the behaviour

haviour of the clergy ſince that time is ſo known, and freſh in the memory of every one, that it will be needleſs for me to ſay any thing of it here.

And as I have had no other inducement in laying this before the publick, than a ſincere zeal for the liberty of all my fellow-ſubjects againſt every oppreſſion of what kind ſoever; ſo if in this attempt any miſtake has been committed (tho' I am not conſcious of any at preſent) I ſhall always be ready ingenuouſly to acknowledge it.

FINIS.

FINIS.